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3

[legend]

Reiji Sueno, an ordinary young man in hard Tohoku region, has the
All seems to be overcast, the night sky is a vision full of shimmering stars
with a glowing sphere, floating over the
The spirit of a hero, an immortal from another dimension,
appears to a hero to pass on the mystical power to him.
With the magical power, the two players, Reiji and Elgin,
begin their journey in a world being...



Legend

Arc 3 - Altar of Inheritance

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Chapter 60

A few days passed after the results of the rank up test were announced. The figure of Rei could be seen in the Dusk Wheat as usual.

His Dragon Robe and Shoes of Sleipnir had been taken off and put in his rented room. He was lying on the bed with a carefree expression, reading a book that he had bought at the bookstore.

Its contents were mainly about dungeons.

Ever since he heard from Gran that the nominated request would be at a dungeon, he had gone to a store to buy a book about monsters that could be found there and how to dismantle them.

「As I thought, a thief is essential in a dungeon.」

According to the book, most dungeons had traps.

And as for the traps, some were set by the more intelligent monsters that lived in the dungeon, while others were spontaneously created when the dungeon was formed.

「The General Princess, as she fought on a battlefield, probably doesn't have any skills as a thief. I'm the same as well. In that case, will she employ a thief here in Gimuru? I can only hope that there is a thief accompanying the General Princess.....」

Thinking like that, he had a look of resignation.

After all, Gran had told Rei that the nominated request only required that he followed the Duke's daughter. Because of that, he was pretty sure that it would be unlikely that they would hire a thief here in the city of Gimuru. His last hope was that the Duke's daughter had a someone with a thief's skills accompanying her.

「Rather, shouldn't I keep studying to be able to disarm a simple trap?」

Though Rei thought about that, there was only a few days remaining before the start of the request. Though he wanted to, it was clear that there wasn't

enough time to learn a thief's skills.

「It seems there's no use just thinking about it. I'll go move my body a bit.」

Though he had been asked not to take on subjugation requests, he could still exercise his body, to stop his movements from dulling, in the training ground at the guild

Still, it was better than nothing. He quickly prepared himself and left the inn.

And when he went to the stables.....

「Here Set-chan. Eat this, eat this.」

The figure of Milein could be seen, feeding Set, who had an expression as if she was melting away.

「Gururu~」

While smiling wryly at Set's happiness at being fed, he approached the woman and animal.

「Ah, Rei. Sorry to bother you.」

「No, I did say you can come to see Set at any time..... You don't have a request today?」

To Rei's question, Milein gave a small nod while stroking Set's back.

「Yes. Because we exerted ourselves against Forest Crawlers yesterday, we're having today be a rest day.」

「.....I see. You've been working hard.」

Forest Crawlers. As its name suggested, they were monsters similar to a giant green caterpillar that lived in the forest. The smaller ones had a length of around 2m. For the bigger ones, it wasn't unusual for them to exceed 3m. Their combat power wasn't high for a D rank monster and the danger was much lower compared to Treants, who were also D rank monsters. However, since it was basically a giant green caterpillar, it was a monster that was highly disliked by female adventurers. Moreover, since it had a spongy body, most vanguards didn't like to attack it. For Milein, who was a female fencer, it could be called the worst match up.

「I know right? Because of that, I'm playing with Set today to release my

stress.Do you have any work today Rei?」

「No, I was just planning to the guild training ground to move my body. I was wondering if Set wanted to come along..... What will you do?」

Rei called out to Set, who was being stroked by Milein. Though he thought that Set would like to remain here with Milein..... After thinking about it, Set gave a cry that he wanted to go with him.

Milein probably understood. She let out a sigh with a regretful look.

「With that said, what do you plan to do Milein?」

「Ah..... That's right. Then I'll go with you two. I've also wanted to spar at least once with Rei. How about that?」

Even Milein was interested in Rei's combat strength, as he had been able to easily fight against an Orc King, a higher ranking species of an Orc, which even she would have trouble with. Rei gave a simple nod.

「I also wanted to spend a little bit more time with Set-chan.」

However, Milein added on her probable main aim.

After that, they took Set out from the stables and headed towards the guild as usual.

The difference was that instead of 1 person and 1 animal, there were now 2 people and 1 animal.

「Set-chan, Set-chan. Here, this.」

Normally, Rei would buy food for Set at the food stalls, but that role had changed over to Milein.

While looking at this situation, Rei called out to Milein as he bought a bread roll with meat inside, similar to a hotdog, and brought it to his mouth.

「Though you were clamoring about a lack of money a little while ago, you can afford things now?」

「Something like that. After all, we beat a rare species with Set during the Treant subjugation request we did, while Rei was doing the rank up test. The materials were sold for a rather large amount of money. We didn't get the magic stone though.」

According to Mileins words, it was highly likely Set got the Poison Claws skill from the rare species.

「The legs, thread and magic stones of the Forest Crawlers we defeated yesterday also sold for a decent price. We have a little cash to spare.」

As usual, adventurers and Gimuru city residents who knew about Set gathered towards Milein and Set.

And arriving at the guild, Set moved to the carriage waiting area and lied down without Rei having to say anything.

The warm and sunny place had already become Set's exclusive space.

「Set-chan, I'll be leaving for a while. I'm going to have a spar with your master.」

「Guru~」

Set gave a short cry as he saw the two people off. Rei and Milein went directly to the training ground without entering through the guild.

「There not many people here today.」

Milein muttered as she looked around the training ground.

In fact, there were only 5 other people in the training ground. Other than those 5, there were none present.

As for the 5 people, as they were training in the same place, it was easy to deduce that they were either in the same party or knew each other.

「Well, I think not many people are here because it's around the middle of the day.」

Though there were people who exercised their body in preparation for a later request, that was usually early in the morning. Right now, it was already midday. The only people that would come to the training ground at this time were either those on a break, like Rei and Milein, or those who were having a training day.

「That is true. Well then, let's spar after we warm up ourselves. Is that fine?」

「Ahh, no problem.」

Nodding to Milein's words, Rei took out the Death Scythe from the Misty Ring.

Although there were sounds of surprise from the direction of the 5 people who were looking at them, people being surprised at Rei's Misty Ring had become normal for him. He started to warm up, disregarding them.

Slowly swinging down the Death Scythe, he raised it back up and made a side sweep as he advanced forward smoothly. At the same time, he didn't just use the blade but also treated the handle as a spear as he stabbed the air.

To his dance like movements, not just the other 5 people in the training ground, Milein was also involuntarily fascinated by it.

「Well then.」

As Milein smiled wryly, she unsheathed her long sword and started to do some warm up exercises.

A few minutes later, after warming up, they turned around to face each other and exchanged a small nod as they readied their weapons.

And then! At that moment, a voice called out, as if it was waiting for that moment.

「Sorry, are you available?」

The one who called out was someone from the 5 person group that has been in the training ground earlier. His face had gentle features and gave off the impression of a good-natured person. He seemed to be older than Rei and was closer to Milein's age group of late teens to early twenties. As for Rei, he was reminded of Arogan and Supervia, who had both taken the rank up test that finished a few days ago.

「Do you need something?」

「You two, are you about to spar? Are you two okay if we watch it?」

「..... At the very least, you should give your names before asking for something.」

「Oh, sorry, sorry. I just thought that both of you seemed to be quite skilled. Umm, I'm Beamuta, I'm the leader of the E rank party Earthen Bonds formed with those 4 over there.」

Beamuta gave a quick bow and apologised for his bad manners as he introduced himself. Milein gave a faint smile and spoke up.

「Milein. I act as the leader of Scorching Wind.」

「Scorching Wind, if I remember, you're C rank.....uwa~. No wonder you're skilled with the sword.....」

Faced with Beamuta's admiration, Rei gave in and also introduced himself.

「I'm Rei. A rank D adventurer. I've been acting solo.」

「Rei.....? I feel like I've heard that name somewhere..... Anyways, getting to D rank at that age is amazing. So, putting that aside, would it be possible for us to observe your sparring session? Though I'm rank D myself, most of the kids over there are rank E and F, I want to show them a fight between higher ranks.」

「A high rank..... I don't think C rank can exactly be called that.」

To Milein's words, who was not being modest, but rather stating the facts, Beamuta shook his head to object.

「At your age, leading a C rank party is already amazing. So, how about it?」

「Well, though I don't mind..... Rei?」

Perhaps as one of the city of Gimuru's promising youths, she had become accustomed to things like this. Milein didn't have any problems with it and nodded as she asked Rei.

「That's okay, I don't mind as long as they don't interfere.」

「Thank you. We absolutely won't disturb you.」

Beamuta gave a bow and ran back to his companions. Milein gave a wry smile at Rei as they saw him off.

「That was a little surprising. I thought that you would refuse to let them watch us spar because of your various secrets.」

「Many secrets, huh? I certainly can't deny that.」

「That's right. You even hid something inside my body. Well, it's fine as long as we were able to improve our fighting strength as a result.」

Saying such things, she remembered the Seeds of Contract that were used on the members of Scorching Wind.

Certainly, as long as they didn't speak of Rei's secret, no harm would be done. On the contrary, they were able to obtain fire resistance and an improvement in fire related magic.

While recalling such things, Beamuta returned to Rei with the other 4 people.

「Sorry for making you wait. Come on, all of you.」

『Nice to meet you.』

Following Beamuta's words, the 4 people bowed.

Looking at them, the four boys and girls were around Rei's age.

Among them, there was also a girl who was clearly younger than Rei. Not just Rei, Milein was also surprised.

「That's a pretty young party.」

「Yes. Everyone comes from the same orphanage as me, so I'm taking care of them.」

「Ah, big brother Bea is embarrassed.」

「As I thought, big brother Bea is embarrassed because he saw a beautiful woman. I almost thought he had no interest in women.」

To those jeers that weren't really jeers, Beamuta blushed while being unable to refute them.

「Idiot, don't be rude to Milein-san who gave some of her time to show us a mock battle. I'm sorry.」

「It's fine, don't worry about it. Please move a little further away as it will be dangerous.」

「Yes.」

(She's quite familiar with handling children.....)

While feeling admiration at Milein and Beamuta's conversation, he settled his heart and mind as he readied the Death Scythe.

「Okay, I'm ready. Ah, magic is not allowed.」

「I understand. Weapons only.」

「Okay. Then..... That's right, Beamuta-san, signal the start.」

「Then..... Start!」

At Beamuta's signal, Milein kicked against the ground as she went towards Rei with her long sword.

While readying the Death Scythe to meet it, Rei stepped forward daringly.

「-!？」

She didn't think Rei would dare lose the chance to use his reach. Milein hesitated for a moment.....And as a result, it allowed Rei to enter within sword's reach.

「Here I come!」

Finding a moment of opportunity, Rei swept the Death Scythe's handle at Milein's legs to trip her. Milein realised Rei's intention by the movements of the large scythe and quickly jumped back.

After that moment, the handle of the Death Scythe swept sharply past the place where Milein's feet had been.

「..... As expected of you. It's a misrepresentation that you're D rank.」

「I didn't think you would see through my intentions so easily.」

「I'm still C rank, I can't lose that easily. I can't lose face as a senior in front of an audience.」

「You were the type of person to mind those things?」

While arguing jokingly, they made feints with their eyes and body as they searched for an opportunity against each other.

(That said, time will just pass with this. Then.....)

Deciding in his mind, while continuing to talk, he gradually increased the distance between them.

Milein, who was watching the situation, twitched every time she saw a chance. But as she understood that it was a taunt, she didn't go in recklessly.

Though Rei pretended to show an opening to provoke an attack, Milein began to feel the pressure of whether to leave it or to attack.

Is this a good opportunity to attack? Is this a chance? I have to attack..... Such thoughts went through her head.....

「Haaa!」

No longer able to take the pressure, she took a large step forward.

Against the sword swinging down with fighting spirit, Rei received the sword blade with the blade of the Death Scythe and parried it with the handle..... When Milein's sword blade had almost reached his hands, he twisted the Death Scythe and flicked the sword into the air.

The next moment, the Death Scythe was held against the neck of the disarmed Milein.

「That's enough, the winner is Rei!」

Beamuta's voice echoed through the training ground as he declared the end of the match. Beamuta's adventurer companions raised voices in surprise at the scene of a D rank adventurer winning against a C rank adventurer.

Chapter 61

It was the day after the spar with Milein. Rei was reading a book on dungeons in his room in the inn, as he had been doing for the past few days, when there was a knock at the door.

「Who is it?」

「I've come from the guild. Because more information regarding the nominated request has arrived, I'm sorry, but could you come with me?」

「I understand. Please give me a moment to get ready.」

(It's finally come it seems.)

Rei understood that it was the detailed explanation of the request that Gran had mentioned after announcing the results of the rank up test. Storing the book he had been reading into the Misty Ring, he wore the Dragon Robe and put on the Shoes of Sleipnir before opening the door.

There was a middle aged man who appeared to be in his 40's.

Looking at Rei, he gave a small nod.

「Then I will take you there immediately.」

「Ah.By the way, am I going by myself?」

「Yes? There hasn't been any information that Rei-san has joined a party.....is it incorrect?」

「No, I was just talking about the Griffon I tamed.」

He had thought that the information he had received might have been wrong. He gave a small nod as he gave a sigh of relief.

「Yes. Only Rei-san is needed today. If we were going to the guild, then it wouldn't matter if you bring your tamed monster, but.....」

「Hm? Didn't you say you came from the guild earlier?」

「Though I certainly am a guild staff member, this time I'm guiding Rei-san to the place of the person who nominated you for this request.Do you understand if I put it that way?」

He asked Rei. Rei had known who it was after hearing Gran's story. In other

words.

「The lord of this city, Margrave Rowlocks.....is it.」

「That's right. Though normally it would be explained at the guild, because of the situation in this case, it will be explained in the lord's residence.」

「.....Well, in that case, I certainly can't take my Griffon.」

If he took Set and something went wrong, it was easy to imagine that he wouldn't be able to stay in the city of Gimuru.

「I understand. However, may I stop at the stables for a moment before we leave? The Griffon I tamed is quite smart. I will tell him that I'll be going out for a while. Otherwise, there's a possibility he will chase after me, thinking I was kidnapped.」

「.....Are Griffons really that smart?」

「Well, my Griffon might be a special one.」

He replied in the negative to the guild staff member as they went towards the stables. On the way, Rei saw a splendid carriage in front of the Dusk Wheat, as expected of a request from a lord. He entered the stable as he admired the odd scene.

「Gururu~」

As Rei entered the stables, Set greeted him with a cry.

However, Rei spoke out while patting Set's head.

「Sorry Set. I have to go out now, I can't take you along because it's the lord's residence this time.」

「Guru~」

While giving a lonely cry, Set rubbed his head against Rei.

「What, unlike the rank up test, I'll be back at once. I won't be gone for a few days.」

「Guru~」

Still, Set gave a lonely cry as Rei left after patting him one last time.

Set quietly watched them until they could no longer be seen.

「I've kept you waiting.」

Though Rei said that to the guild messenger who was at the front of the carriage, the guild messenger shook his head while opening the carriage door.

「No, as I've worked with various adventurers in the guild, I understand. Here, please. The lord is waiting.」

「Thank you, I feel better now that you said that.」

He urged Rei into the carriage while smiling.

Under such circumstances, Rei got into the carriage while thinking to himself when he had become such an important person.

While thinking about that, the messenger closed the carriage door and moved to the coachman's seat.

「.....The weather's not too nice today.」

Rei muttered while looking out from inside the carriage.

In fact, the sky was currently covered in clouds, it wouldn't be strange if rain started falling.

While thinking about that, because there wasn't anything in particular to do inside the carriage, he took out the book about dungeons that he had been reading in his room and continued reading it.

Though he had been reading it whenever possible in the last few days, he was still only 70% through it. At the very least, Rei wanted to finish it before the request actually started.

And after he had been absorbed in the book for a while, the carriage, which had been moving swiftly until then, stopped. The door opened.

「Rei-san, we've arrived at the lord's residence.」

「Ahh, I understand.」

Rei got off the carriage. While feeling raindrops drizzling against his cheeks, following the guild messenger's guidance, he passed through the gates to the lord's residence.

(Rather than the lord's residence.....it looks more like some sort of fort.)

That was impression Rei had after seeing the lord's residence.

It was too large to be a mansion, but it was not quite right to call it a castle. Because of that, looking at the building, it looked like a small fort. Actually, it was clear that the lord's residence was an actual fort. Rei thought that it was probably to evacuate the residents of the city of Gimuru in case of emergencies.

「Here it is.」

Following the guild messenger, they went inside the lord's residence. Maybe to keep up the appearance of a lord, jars and paintings were displayed in the passages. Furthermore, it was quite impressive that light generating magic items that used magic stones were embedded in the wall at regular distances.

However, with things such as halberds and spears decorating the passage, the impression of a fort was much stronger than that of a lord's residence.

He walked after the messenger while curiously looking at the items that decorated the passageway. After 10 minutes, a door with exquisite carvings came into view. The door would have costed at least several gold coins.....at most, it would have costed a platinum coin, Rei looked at it like a work of art.

And when the two people arrived at the door, the messenger knocked on the wall beside the door with a door knocker.

(Is there no door knocker to knock on the door? No, if anything, it's a work of art.....but why is only this door so luxurious? Just looking at this residence that looks like a fort, I didn't think he had the character to like aristocratic luxuries.)

While Rei was thinking this in his mind, he heard a voice from behind the door.

「Come in.」

「Yes. Please excuse me.」

Hearing those words, the messenger reached out for the door. He grabbed the handle but touched as little of the carvings as possible as he opened the door.

「Lord-sama, I have brought Rei, the D rank adventurer, for the matter about the nominated request.」

「Mm, it's been hard work for you. I've been waiting. Well, come in.」

Hearing this from inside, Rei entered the room as prompted by the messenger.

「-!？」

And the moment he stepped foot into the room. He heard a sharp sound and felt blood lust to his side. He immediately kicked against the ground, jumped forward and rolled.

After rolling once on the floor, he reflexively took out the Death Scythe from the Misty Ring and readied it.

And in front of Rei's eyes was someone wearing a suit of armour, the person's head was also covered in a metal helmet. Rei's eyes were attracted to the sword in the person's hand.

(This is the same feeling as Arogan's magic sword. In other words, this is a magic sword!)

The moment he readied the Death Scythe, he kicked against the floor again. However, this time it wasn't to avoid the enemy's attack but to eliminate the enemy who had attacked him.

「Haah!」

The room he had been guided to had enough room to wield the Death Scythe, that was fortunate for Rei.

Taking advantage of his good fortune, the blade of the Death Scythe swept towards the body of the assailant while cutting through the backrest of a sofa in the lord's room.

「Damn!」

The Death Scythe was a peculiar weapon made from the Magic Beast Art, despite weighing more than 100kg, Rei could wield it at a speed as if it was a knife or fork without feeling its weight. Maybe instinctively guessing the power behind it, the assailant quickly jumped back to evade it.

Zing~, the blade passed in front of him a few cm away. It made a sharp sound as if tearing space apart as it cut through the air. The assailant broke out in cold sweat inside his helmet.

(Impossible. Even if he was recommended by Margrave Rowlocks, how could he be such a threat to me as a D rank adventurer? No, that was just luck before. I won't admit such a thing!)

When meeting with a person that exceeded one's imagination, most people would either choose to fight them or receive them nicely. In other words, their mind would either move to eliminate the existence or build an amiable relationship to obtain protection. And this man immediately selected the former.

(If I knew this would happen, I would have brought my usual magic spear rather than a magic sword!)

Though the man regretted his imprudence in his mind, he still readied his magic sword against Rei.

Rei also set up his Death Scythe against the person opposite him.

Reaching this stage, Rei was able to roughly understand the circumstances. After all, this was the lord's residence, why would he be attacked by a thug in what could be considered the lord's own room.

(If it's for such a reason.)

He threw away the doubt in this mind immediately. He had been invited to the lord's residence regarding the escort of the General Princess. If he thought about it, the answer was simple.

(Testing my skill as an escort.....is it. Then maybe this guy is an attendant of the General Princess or something.)

Though he understood that, he understood the fight wouldn't end easily just like that. In other words, there was no point if he didn't show his skills to the man in front of him.

「.....Here I come.」

Shortly after saying that, Rei kicked against the ground and closed the distance to the man.

As for the man, he readied his magic sword, waiting for Rei discard the advantage of his reach and enter his range.

「Take this!」

With a sharp cry, the man thrust forward with the sword in his hand. As he usually used a spear, the speed and power were different. However, the sword thrust still carried a decent amount of power.

However, Rei avoided the thrust at his face by moving his neck slightly.

「Not yet!」

The blade that had shot forth returned to the man in an instant. In a flash, one, two and three stabs were sent out.

Rei narrowed the distance while avoiding the attacks with the minimum amount of movement.

(Impossible, even though I'm using a magic sword rather than my usual magic spear, to continuously avoid my thrusts? Is he really rank D!?)

Though the man felt a strange fear of Rei in his heart, he made his last attack of 5 consecutive thrusts.

His final attack, his fastest attack. Rei repelled the thrusts with the handle of the Death Scythe and finished by hitting the man's body with the handle at short range.

「Gah~!」

Dong~, the sound of metal striking the armour echoed through the room. At the same time as the sound, as the man flew through the air, he tried to grab the handle and pull Rei towards him.....Rei noticed it in an instant and brought the Death Scythe back to himself.

(Damn, what's with this guy's brute strength. It will be dangerous if it stays this way. In that case, it's not too disappointing.....)

The moment the Death Scythe swung towards him, he tried to raise his sword to try to block at least some of the impact.

And as Rei swung the Death Scythe and the blade approached the man.....

「That's enough!」

A loud voice echoed inside the room just before the blade of the Death Scythe

came into contact with the man's magic sword.

Chapter 62

Rei was suddenly attacked when he entered the lord's room. Guessing the identity of his assailant, he fought back in the lord's room to show his ability and was about to deal a fatal blow. At that point, Margrave Rowlocks, the lord of the city of Gimuru, called out to him.

Flying through the air, the man that was hit by the handle of the Death Scythe made a defensive fall to the floor. However.....

「Gueh!」

At any rate, even though he was wearing armour, he was still hit with the handle of the Death Scythe, which weighed over 100kg. Moreover, Rei had struck with his full strength. Being able to break the armour was enough proof of its power. The man who landed on the floor crouched down, holding his side in pain from the impact of landing.

「Kuust-dono, call someone who can use healing magic at once.」

「No, it's not necessary.」

The man, who was called Kuust, removed his helmet, revealing a someone in his twenties with a handsome face and orange hair. He declined Margrave Rowlocks' words as he focused his mind while holding his side.

『Water, show mercy and heal my wounds.』

Blue light gathered in his hand.....

『Blue Healing.』

Completing the healing magic, the light was drawn into Kuust's side. Kuust maintained this position for several seconds but stood up before long.

「I showed you a disgraceful scene. I'm fine now.」

「Hoh~. You can use water healing magic. Should I say, as expected.」

「Now that I am that person's guard, healing magic is indispensable.」

「I see. Oh, I almost forgot. I am the lord of this city of Gimuru.」

Nodding at Kuust's words, Margrave Rowlocks introduced himself to Rei.

Rei wasn't quite accustomed with what to do and gave a bow as he spoke.

「I'm Rei, a D rank adventurer. I was called here for an appointment today. Anyhow, as I grew up in the mountain depths, I hope you can overlook my impolite wording.」

「Ahh, you don't need to mind that. Rather than that, take a seat. From here on, I'll give a detailed description about the request.」

Rei's consciousness was that of Saiki Reiji, a Japanese who was brought up and lived in Tohoku. If anything, it was basically near the heart of the mountains. Of course, his words were appropriate but not quite adequate for nobles.....fortunately, as he was a former soldier, Margrave Rowlocks' character didn't seem to be one who was worried over the details of etiquette.

.....However, on the other hand, Kuust turned his eyes at Rei with some suspicion.

「No, don't sit down on that sofa. Please wait a moment.」

When Margrave Rowlocks looked at the backrest of the sofa which had been split in two by Rei's Death Scythe, he said that while ringing a bell that was put on the desk.

As soon as he did so, there was a knock on the door and a person that looked like a butler entered the room.

「Did you call?」

「Umu~. The sofa isn't of any use anymore. Replace it with something that can be used.」

「Certainly.」

The butler gave a quick bow before leaving. A few minutes later, three workers took out the sofa that Rei had destroyed and brought in a new one.

After that, they gave a bow and silently left the room.

Margrave Rowlocks saw them off and spoke to Kuust and Rei again.

「Well then, I'll explain the request immediately. But first, introductions. Though I said this earlier, I'm the lord of the city of Gimuru, Daska Rowlocks.」

Margrave Daska Rowlocks introduced himself while moving to a luxurious

desk, which seemed to be his work table.

In response, Kuust spoke up.

「Kuust Brassin. I serve as the commander of Elena-sama's military escort.」

(I see, a surname. In other words, this man, Kuust, is a noble.)

You're next, Kuust seemed to say as he looked at Rei.

Seeing that, Rei spoke up similarly.

「I'm a rank D adventurer. Rei.」

Unlike the other two, Rei no title and made a brief self-introduction.

「So, as for the important matter of the request.....Kuust-dono, the details.」

Nodding at Daska's words, Kuust turned to Rei.

「Listen up, this is an extremely simple request. We will be taking Elena-sama, Duke Kerebel's daughter, to a dungeon in the vicinity of Gimuru. We have to take her to a place called the Altar of Inheritance, which we have been told is in the lowest layers of the dungeon.」

「.....Altar of Inheritance? That is?」

Though he didn't remember hearing about the Altar of Inheritance before and asked about it, Kuust gave a scornful laugh.

「Even if you are a person that Margrave Rowlocks recommended, a mere adventurer can't just ask things. You should just handle the work you have been given in silence.」

Though Rei frowned his eyebrows slightly, he continued to listen as Margrave Rowlocks was here.

「In other words, I should think along the lines of being a literal guard?」
「That's right. Other than that, you don't need to do anything else. Moreover, I don't think you'll be needed as a guard for Elena-sama as me and the rest of the guards will be there. It's only because Margrave Rowlocks said so that you, who isn't a noble, can follow us.Listen up, don't have any misunderstandings. You are merely an addition, you do not need to take unnecessary action. If you follow us quietly, you will receive the request

reward. There will be no complaints.」

「.....Kuust-dono, isn't that a bit unfair? In the first place, didn't Duke Kerebel tell me to only prepare adventurers of rank D?」

「No, that I know. But, couldn't you have at least prepared an adventurer from the nobility.」

Reproving Daska's words, Kuust answered vehemently, showing his dissatisfaction.

However, Daska shook his head.

「I'm sorry, but Kuust-dono, as you know, this is the frontier. Therefore, an adventurer's family social standing is disregarded, only their ability is important.」

「Margrave Rowlocks! You are not allowed to disregard nobility!」

Daska shook his head again while telling Kuust that there was no merit in nobility.

「Calm down, Kuus-dono. There are certainly capable nobles in the Imperial Capital, and a noble might occasionally work as an adventurer. But as I said, this is the frontier. In the first place, the number of nobles here is small, and from those nobles, the ones with ability are even fewer. Then you have to think about their actual combat power. Can Kuust-dono, who serves Duke Kerebel, a central figure in the Nobles faction, not understand?」

「That is.....yes, I understand.」

「What is necessary for an adventurer in the end is their ability. You have tasted Rei's abilities the hard way just before.」

「.....Yes.」

「And finally, this person is followed by a Griffon, an A rank monster. Do you still have any complaints?」

「No. I will gratefully receive Margrave Rowlocks' kindness. Then, I apologise, but I must leave here to ready preparations to meet Elena-sama tomorrow. Hey, Rei. It is necessary for you to meet the other members and Elena-sama. Come down to the front gate when the 9 AM bell sounds.Come with your Griffon. However, I will not permit you to be rude to Elena-sama.」

Glancing at Rei, as if looking down on him, Kuust said that before leaving the

room.

Although Margrave Rowlocks had given instructions as the lord of this city, Kuust couldn't stand that he, who was a noble, had to act together with Rei.

(Damn, why must I take care of this commoner. But a Margrave is a Margrave. To bring a person of unknown birth near Elena-sama.....what is he thinking? Does he intend to do what Vel was concerned about and use this opportunity to chip away at the power and strength of the Nobles faction?)

A story that he had heard before leaving for the city of Gimuru from his colleague, Vel, passed through his mind.

In other words, Margrave Rowlocks may be plotting something against Elena this time. Therefore, consulting with Duke Kerebel, they requested a D rank adventurer to accompany Elena in the case that there was an emergency situation.....

(His combat strength cannot be considered D rank. In terms of ability, he's rank B.....no, it wouldn't be strange to call him rank A. On top of that, he's accompanied by a Griffon, an A rank monster.It's dangerous. It would be best for Vel to take Elena-sama back after she arrives.)

Kuust remembered the figure of his colleague, who was familiar with underhanded work, in his mind.

Originally, it was planned for his subordinates to arrive ahead of Elena rather than he, who was the commander. However, Kuust was ordered to go ahead first to show his sincerity to take care of Elena for the near future.

Though at first, he felt that it was a blow to his prestige to have to leave Elena's side, he now knew from personal experience that this city of Gimuru was a dangerous place. It was probably a good thing that he kept this in his mind rather than saying that out.

「I'm sorry.」

Seeing Kuust disappear from the room, Daska gave a brief apology to Rei.

Though most nobles would rarely apologise to commoners due to the difference in social standing, Margrave Daska Rowlocks had a different nature

and did so without a second thought. However, it was because he was such a person he was endeared to everyone in the city of Gimuru.

「No, I don't mind it as that attitude is probably normal among.....nobles」
「Kukuku~. You seem to be very poor in etiquette.」

Daska smiled and didn't bother to rephrase Rei's words. However, he soon put on a serious expression and spoke up.

「However, since you've reached D rank, there may be a possibility your acquaintances in nobility will increase. If we just talk about your abilities, it is already B or A rank. You should become familiar with our etiquette before it is too late.」

「.....Yes. However, even if I'm capable, isn't it dangerous for two people to meet like that for the first time?」

「That wasn't my idea, although it might be better for you to think that way..... well, something like that. Anyhow, I'm not so good with words myself. So, what was it. Though this was a dangerous way to meet each other.....you probably noticed?」

Daska glanced at the door, ceiling and floor that connected to the neighbouring rooms, subtly directing Rei .

With that, Rei felt signs of life from those places, looking at him as if they wanted to kill him.

「After all, D rank isn't the right evaluation for you. Even Kuust-dono, who leads Miss Elena's escort, should have noticed.」

Daska saw Rei's looks and gave a wry smile.

「So, right. Now that Kuust-dono has gone, I'll get straight to the main subject of the request. As Kuust-dono said earlier, it appears to be true that Miss Elena's goal is the area called the Altar of Inheritance that is near the lowest layers of the dungeon.」

「.....Why would someone called the General Princess bother to go to a dungeon?」

「Well, not even I know the details. However, to come all the way from the Imperial Capital to the frontier to go to a dungeon, there must be some reason for them to head for the area known as the Altar of Inheritance. So, the

problem is that the area know as the Altar of Inheritance is near the lowest layers. In other words, to reach there, you have to keep clearing through the dungeon.....Rei, do you have any knowledge about dungeons?」

Being asked that, Rei recalled the contents of the book about dungeons that he had read recently.

「It is created for some reason when magic power gathers and forms a physical nucleus. The monster that gains power from the nucleus becomes a boss monster and the dungeon will slowly expand until the boss monster is defeated. The expansion of a dungeon will stop if the boss monster is defeated. Finally, the dungeon will collapse if the nucleus is destroyed. However, it was written in the book that materials, ore and valuable items will no longer be found in the dungeon if the nucleus was destroyed.」

「Ahh, that's more or less correct. So, the boss monster in the dungeon that Miss Elena is heading for hasn't been subjugated yet, it's the reason it's a so called 'living dungeon'. Because that, there are many dangers. That's why I nominated you to support the escort.」

「.....Are there any maps of the dungeon?」

If it was the upper layers, dungeon maps for them were normally sold in the guild. However, for maps of lower layers where monsters with profitable materials, high quality ore or valuable medical herbs could be found, the people who knew would often monopolise the information. It wasn't possible for low ranking adventurers to know about them.

But.

「They have prepared for that here. Though as expected, there are no maps for the lowest layers regarding the Altar of Inheritance, they are prepared for down to the middle layers. However, information is valuable. Only one map has been prepared and because of that, Miss Elena, who is the leader of this search, will have it rather than you.」

「I understand. A map will help us to some extent.」

「.....I'm relying on you. Honestly, there are too many unclear factors in this request. Even if she's called the General Princess, the fact is that Miss Elena only has experience on the battlefield. Yet the escort only has a few people and the only adventurers I can send have to be rank D. This is too blatant to be

doing something behind our backs.However, if by any chance Miss Elena dies during this request, I will not be able to escape responsibility.」

「But, hasn't the other side made an unreasonable demand? That is, I wouldn't think there would be a problem if made Axe of the Thunder God go with them.....」

「It's impossible to do that, I am in a position below the Duke.Honestly, even if I say that I trust your combat strength, I feel that this is a harsh request to give you even though you've just been promoted to rank D. However, I have to rely on you. It's neither for your sake or for mine. It's for the sake of not letting the Nobles faction interfere with the city of Gimuru. I want you to succeed in this request although it will be difficult.」

Daska bowed his head again.

「Please raise your head. Because it would be a problem for me if strangers meddled with the city, I will do my best.」

In this way, Rei was irresistibly caught up in the troubles of the nobles.

Chapter 63

On the road leading to the city of Gimuru, a carriage had currently stopped.

.....Yes, stopped rather than fled.

If you could see the area beside the highway, anyone would understand.

A battle between monsters and humans was currently being fought.

Though it was a common occurrence for people traveling along the highway to be attacked by monsters, this time it was different. Normally, the monsters were the attackers and the people were the ones fleeing. But this time, it was the people who were attacking.....no, a single person was trampling them.

「Wretched Orcs, lament over your bad luck of attacking us as you die!」

The girl said so while swinging a large weapon.

The weapon was slightly longer than an long sword and looked like an ordinary sword. However, when wielded by the woman, the tip of the sword extended out, bending like a whip. There were also blades at intervals along the whip. It was a so-called sword whip. Though it was normally a magic item that required advanced skills to use, the girl wielded the sword whip as if dancing.

TLN: Technically it's not a true sword whip but a retractable one. It's basically a sword that can extend and turn into a sword whip with magic.

A beautiful girl was dancing beautifully. Her features were like a work of art and her sharp eyes displayed her strength and determination. She had a sex appeal particular to girls in their late teens who were nearing womanhood. In addition, she had luscious blonde hair with the golden threads stretching from her head to the the middle of her back. The ends of her hair were rolled up in the drill hair hairstyle.

Like her sword whip, the amour covering her body was also a magic item. It's effect was to grant the wind's blessing, increasing the speed of the person who had it equipped. It also gave the ability to read the wind. Her golden cape, that matched the colour of her hair, was a magic item that protected her back,

providing the effect of danger perception. On her feet, she wore Shoe's of Sleipnir that allowed her to make several steps into the air. The necklace that she hung at her chest increased her magic defense, sandwiched between two big hills which wouldn't cease to draw the eyes of men.

Admirably, the girl who was covered with magic items wasn't relying completely on the effects of the items but had mastered how to use them.

「What's wrong, don't you want to obtain me? Then show your power! I will never leave my body to a man weaker than myself!」 TLN: Ehh.....so basically, she's a battle junkie.

Shouting like so, the girl wielded her sword whip. Fiercely, she whirled the sword whip around as if dancing. Though he realised it was aiming for his life, the Orc still lost his life while admiring the good looks of the girl. Blood splattered and several drops of blood fell onto her white skin as she forcefully cut off the neck of the Orc. The blood only became makeup, highlighting the beauty of the girl.

Her figure was beautifully brilliant but also cruel. She also had the charisma and dignity of a commander that drew people's eyes. She could be described as both the god or goddess of war and the goddess of beauty.

Yes, the girl who had just taken down more than 10 Orcs by herself was Elena Kerebel. The daughter of Duke Kerebel, who not only won fame for her activities in Mireana Kingdom but the Bestir Empire as well. She was a famous person known as the General Princess within neighbouring countries.

Two knights watched their boss from a short distance away.

「As expected of Elena-sama. Orcs are nothing much.」

The female knight watched Elena, who seemed to be hunting Orcs while dancing, with an enchanted expression. She was in her late teens, a little younger than Elena. Her name was Ara Skarlay, one of the members of Elena's escort. Her surname indicated that she was a noble, she was the third daughter of the Earl Skarlay, who belonged to the Nobles faction.

「Ahh, our Miss is beautiful but also scary, or should I say that she's beautiful because she's scary.....」

A knight in his early twenties, Vel Sails, gave a wry smile in amazement. He was also a member of the escort and was the second son of Viscount Sails, who also belonged to the Nobles faction.

Along with Marquis Brassin's second son, Kuust, these two people made up Elena's escort and were heading to Gimuru on the orders of Duke Kerebel to protect her.

「Still, Orcs appearing on the highway.....it's strange that even Orc Archers and Orc Mages appeared.」

Ara muttered while looking admiringly at Elena. Vel heard those words and replied in his usual light tone.

「I heard that there recently was a subjugation force sent out from Gimuru to destroy an Orc village nearby, perhaps these are the survivors.」

「.....You, even knowing the events in such a remote frontier.」

Vel had a wry smile as he saw the look of surprise on his colleague's face.

「Naturally. I have to gather information as it is the city we're heading for, as the person working behind the scenes. The city of Gimuru isn't part of the Nobles faction but the Neutral faction. Moreover, it's the territory of Margrave Rowlocks, who is regarded as a big shot in the faction.」

「.....That's true. We can't neglect gathering intelligence in order to protect Elena-sama.」

「Well, because Elena-sama is stronger than all of us together, there's not much meaning to an escort.」

「Hey you-!」

Facing Ara who shouted at him, Vel turned his eyes to Elena to change the topic.

「Look there, the fight will be over soon. We will be late to arrive in the city of Gimuru if we are delayed cleaning up. I also want to collect some of the magic stones of the Orcs Elena-sama defeated.」

「I don't think there's a need to collect the Orc materials in particular.」

「Don't say that. You know, if we take the magic stones and sell them at the city of Gimuru, don't you think we will be able to raise our familiarity a bit?」

「Then, is just the proof of subjugation fine?」

「Well, as for that.....at any rate, we haven't registered with the guild. It would be silly to register with the guild just to sell the proofs of subjugation.」

「If you say so, it's so. But even if you don't belong to the guild, you can still sell the proofs of subjugation.」

While Ara nodded, Elena, who had wiped out a small party of Orcs without a scratch, approached them.

Rather than the colour of fatigue on her face, her breath didn't even seem to be disturbed. However, the colour of her cheeks were reddened slightly due to the intense activity she had done. The violence had only seemed to increase her sex appeal. Though the person herself wasn't interested in love, her appearance gave off an appeal that would attract many people. It was an unfortunate thing for both her and the people around her.

「Should I say, as expected of the frontier. I did not think we would come across such a group of Orcs along the highway in the middle of the day.」

「Thank you for your hard work, Elena-sama. Have this. You have blood on your cheek.....」

Ara gently held out a silk handkerchief.

「Thank you Ara.」

While gently wiping the blood off her cheek with the silk handkerchief, she called out to Vel to cut out the magic stones from the heart in the Orcs' chests.

「Vel. Though it's fine to recover the magic stones, do it quickly. It will be troublesome if other monsters smell the Orcs' blood and approach.」

「Yes, I'll finish it at once.」

Following her orders, Vel skillfully removed the magic stones from the Orcs. Looking from the side, you could tell that he was experienced with the work.

That was natural. After all, they had been attacked many times on the way from the Imperial Capital to the city of Gimuru. After subjugating them, he would take the magic stones from the corpses. His finesse was not inferior in comparison to adventurers.

Showing his deftness, Vel quickly finished taking out the magic stones from over 10 Orcs and casually tossed them into the bag that held the magic stones

from all the other monsters.

「Elena-sama, the magic stones have been collected, let's leave this place. As Elena-sama said, it will be troublesome if new monsters come, attracted by the smell of blood.」

「Umu~, let's do that. There's still some distance to the city of Gimuru. You two keep it up for a little longer.」

「What are you saying. If I'm at Elena-sama's side, I'm always fine!」

「Fufu~, Ara is in high spirits.Vel, are you ready?」

「There doesn't seem to be any damage to the carriage.As expected, it's impressive.」

Vel glanced at the carriage for an instant.

At first glance, this carriage looked like an ordinary carriage. There were few people who could tell that it was actually an advanced magic item. This was because it was given the effect of concealment to stop it from gathering attention. It had also been altered by space magic and held a luxurious 30 tatami room inside. Moreover, because the carriage itself had been reinforced with magic, it was very sturdy, arrows and blades are basically useless against it. It could grant the effect of boosting the abilities of the horses pulling the carriage and the horses pulling the carriage were outstanding warhorses, even for the Mireana Kingdom. As for the carriage, it could be called something along the lines of a moving fortress. It also had the effect of detecting hostility, which was how they had avoided the surprise attack of the Orcs.

TLN: 30 Tatami is about 50m²

All of this was part of Noblesse Oblige. Duke Kerebel, to protect his beloved daughter, who fulfilled her obligation as a noble by casting herself into the battlefield, gathered all the eminent mages and alchemists to produce custom magic item without regard to the cost.

Following Vel's glance at the carriage, Elena gave a small nod.

「Umu~. I have to thank father for this. It's because of it that we can travel along frontier highway with these kids without worrying.」

While saying that, Elena stroked the two warhorses that were pulling the carriage.

「Bururururu!」

As it was stroked, the warhorse gave a small neigh as it seemed to smile comfortably.

「It's just a little more to the city of Gimuru. Do your best.」

After saying that, Elena entered the carriage. Ara followed after her and entered the carriage as well. Vel sat in the driver's seat of the carriage and started moving.

There were many elaborate items of furniture arranged inside the carriage, made with the best technology available. This was also prepared by Duke Kerebel, who as a father, was worried for his daughter going out to a dangerous place and wanted to let her be able to relax.

While waiting for Elena to sit down on the sofa, Ara brewed some tea in the simple kitchen, which was also a magic item, inside the carriage.

「Kuust, I wonder if he's fine?」

「What is it?」

While placing the freshly brewed tea on the table in front of the sofa where Elena was relaxing, Ara murmured.

「You know, if Kuust is talking with another noble, he's quite polite, but he gets bad mannered if the other party is not a noble. I don't want to cause too much of a commotion where we go, as it is the territory of a noble from the Neutral faction and not one from the Nobles faction that Elena-sama is part of.」

「Ara.」

「Yes?」

「My father is certainly a central figure in the Nobles faction. However, I've said myself many times that this doesn't mean I'm part of the Nobles faction. Moreover, I'm not part of the King's faction or Neutral faction either.」

As if the fierce fighting earlier was a lie, Elena said so while gracefully carrying a cup of tea to her mouth.

Seeing the difference manners from before, Ara let out a sigh while admiring her boss.

「Elena-sama, I've said this several times before but other people automatically consider you to be part of the Nobles faction because your father, Duke Kerebel, is a central figure in the Nobles faction.」

「.....Being a noble is such a troublesome thing.」

「When Elena-sama says that while faithfully doing the obligations of the nobility, those words have great persuasive power.」

Placing a plate of cookies that had been prepared onto the table, Ara put on a wry smile.

「I know my obligations as a noble. Because we live off taxing people, I will not hesitate to dedicate myself to protecting the people. However, I have no desire to put my hand into the power struggle.」

「However, because of your relation to Duke Kerebel, who is an influential person in the Nobles faction, Elena-sama's existence has already become a symbol of the Nobles faction. 」

To Ara's words, Elena brought a cookie to her mouth while smiling bitterly.

「General Princess. Honestly, I find it to be an old nickname.」

「What are you saying. That fight where Elena-sama defeated the general of the Bestir Empire in single combat has already spread through the entire Mireana kingdom, let alone the Nobles faction.」

「That story aside. Our future schedule is.....」

「Yes. When we arrive at the city of Gimuru, we first have to meet with Margrave Rowlocks. After staying the night at the lord's residence, we are scheduled to immediately leave for the dungeon the day after.」

「The dungeon is it.The Altar of Inheritance. I really didn't think such a thing would be discovered.」

「I agree. Fortunately, no one in the city of Gimuru seems to be aware of its true value.」

「The biggest problem is whether or not we can get there safely.....should we employ a thief in the city of Gimuru? Even if you say Vel is familiar with those skills, this will be the first time we will be going to a dungeon.」

「Though I think so as well.....anyhow, Vel said it would be okay himself.」

「Hmm.Adventurers in a frontier city. There may possibly be people stronger than me there.」

「Elena-sama.....I want you to stop openly declaring that you would entrust yourself to anyone who could defeat you.」

Even Ara, who idolized Elena, spoke up saying that it was not allowed.

Good looking and accomplished in both literary and martial arts. Because she excelled compared to others, Elena was convinced that to be her partner, the other party had to be better than her. She, who was called the General Princess, openly declared that her partner had to be stronger than her.

Of course, when the young noblemen heard that they could get Duke Kerebel's daughter, the beautiful Elena, as their wife by defeating her, one, then tens, then hundreds of people challenged her and were defeated Elena.

Because of this, Elena was convinced that a partner appropriate for her would not appear in the near future.

.....However, Elena didn't know that her encounter with that person, which could be said to be their destiny, would be in this remote city. And where, for the first time, she would gain awareness as a girl.

TLN: I know, I know, it's a bit cliched. But it's been 63 chapters, it's about time isn't it?

Chapter 64

The day after his first meeting with Kuust at the lord's residence, as promised, Rei headed for the main gate before the 9 am bell.

「Guru～」

Of course, Set was with him.

Though adventurers and city residents approached them as usual along the main street, because they were meeting the Duke's daughter today, he gave short greetings instead of the usual conversations as he headed for the main gate.

「Oh, Rei-kun. Do you by any chance know who those people are waiting for over there? 」

As he handed over his guild card and the Necklace of Subservient Monster as usual, Ranga asked him.

While asking that, Ranga turned his eyes to the people he were referring to. The lord of the city of Gimuru, Daska Rowlocks, was there. Kuust, the commander of Elena's escort, could also be seen there. Naturally, they weren't the only people. About 10 guards were also next to them. Daska had put on luxurious clothes, suitable for a lord. Though what Kuust wore were also luxury goods, it was inferior to what he had worn the day before.

After all, the armour that Kuust had worn the day before had been destroyed by Rei's Death Scythe. The armour that Kuust was wearing now was probably one that had been hurriedly prepared.

(Still, should I say as expected of his financial power to procure an armour of that level.)

Though it certainly might look inferior on the outside to the one that was destroyed yesterday, as it attracted Rei's eyes, it was probably a magic item.

「So?」

He nodded at Ranga's question as he took his guild card back.

「That's not wrong.」

「I thought so. However, it's probably better to not carelessly say things to Kuust. He seems to have a lot of pride.」

Being advised like that, he guessed that Kuust probably caused some sort of commotion at the main gate earlier.

.....However, the advice had come too late for Rei, who had literally beat Kuust up the day before.

「That's a bit late.」

「Ah, why is that?」

「Ahh. Something happened yesterday.」

Saying that after receiving his guild card back, he went out the front gate towards Daska and Kuust with Set.

When everyone near Daska saw Set, they reflexively readied the swords and spears in their hands. It was the same for Kuust, he quickly readied the magic spear in his hands.

「Stop it!My bad Rei. These people are my guards.」

Daska ordered the surrounding people while calling out to Rei with a wry smile.

「No, it's my fault for approaching without calling out.」

「Guru~?」

What's wrong? Set seemed to ask as he tilted his head to the side. Rei stroked his head while telling him it was nothing.

Set gave a happy cry from his throat.

「Hmm, it's pretty tame. It's just as I heard from the stories.」

Daska muttered with an impressed voice as he gave a glance at the man next to him.

Looking over there, there was a man in his middle ages. He gave off the feeling of having forged both his muscles and mind. Though Rei didn't know, the man was called Torenma and served as the deputy commander of the knights that protected the city of Gimuru.

Torenma understood his lord's, Daska's, glance and spoke up to Rei.

「Rei-dono, that is, I'm a bit interested in your monster. If your Griffon is okay with it.....Set, was it, may I touch it?」

(.....I see, does he want to confirm if Set will really obey me? Although lord Daska wanted to test it himself, did he ask his subordinate to do it because it is difficult because of his position?)

Rei was roughly able to understand the exchange in looks with Torenma and nodded.

「Ahh, no problem. There's no problem if you stroke him normally.If you stroke him normally that is. However, remember that Griffons dislike humans trying to do bad things to them.」

To Rei's hinting words, Daska understood Rei's aim and glanced at Torenma again.

Torenma received the glance and merely stroked Set's back as Rei had said.

「Hou~, so this is your prided Griffon. I see, It certainly is a stunning Griffon.」

Kuust interjected as soon as Torenma went away. Though his words were praising, he still had a condescending look in his eyes towards Rei.

「Gurururu~」

In response, Set gave a grumpy cry.

「Unfortunately, it seems Set doesn't favour you.」

「You, what did you say? You, a commoner talking back to people.....」

「Kuust-dono, let's leave it at that. Rei as well. Both of you will be working temporarily with each other starting tomorrow to challenge the dungeon. What will you be doing there if you're quarreling already.」

Though Kuust tried to ready his magic spear against Rei because of his attitude, he reluctantly let it go at Daska's words.

At the same time, Rei held Set back, who was ready to attack at any moment.

「Gururu~」

Though Set gave a cry of discontent, held back by Rei, he could only swallow is

discontent.

.....However, he still continued to glare at Kuust.

Kuust, who looked Set in the eye, froze his movements for an instant.

Noticing that, he clicked his tongue and muttered in his mind so as to not be heard.

(Did I felt fear for a moment even though it's a tamed monster? A Griffon is an A rank monster, so unpleasant. And that guy called Rei doesn't know how to act courteously to nobles as a commoner.....to have to bring such a lowly person near Elena-sama.....such an unpleasant person.)

While looking at Kuust, Rei muttered in his mind.

(Goblin Drool, Dark Night's Star, Arogan, I seem to be destined to meet these kinds of people. Well, it turned out better in the end with Arogan.)

「Guru~?」

What are you doing? Set seemed to ask as he rubbed his head against Rei. Rei stroked his head and told him it was nothing.

Though he originally planned to give Set some of the dried meat he had stored into the Misty Ring, because he was waiting for the General Princess with the lord of the city, he couldn't do such an impolite thing. Instead, he stroked Set's head to soothe him.

Daska discussed some work related matters with his subordinates while Kuust stared at the end of the highway, as if silently praying.

The situation stayed like this for about 30 minutes. Then, at the far end of the highway, a carriage gradually came into view.

Kuust's condescending look that he had against Rei disappeared and was replaced with a joyful face. Likewise, as the person in charge of the territory, Margrave Daska Rowlocks gave a sigh of relief.

After all, he was responsible for the territory. If an incident happened here, it would be Daska's responsibility. It would become a faction conflict if an important figure of a rival faction was attacked by thieves or monsters and was injured or died. It was no wonder that the person responsible and his

subordinates were relieved at their safe arrival.

(Well, if she has the nickname General Princess, I don't think defeating the monsters along the highway would be a problem for her.)

Daska thought in his mind.

General Princess, the proud nickname of military renown had even spread to neighbouring countries.

Rei involuntarily let out a sigh in admiration when he was finally able to confirm the small carriage drawn by two warhorses.

「Uwa~, that's a very splendid carriage.」

At those words, Kuust frowned his eyes slightly for a moment. His eyes showed admiration towards Rei for an instant.Of course, his eyes immediately returned the condescending look had before.

「Hou~, so you noticed. As expected of you.」

Daska spoke to Rei in admiration.

Though he was a feudal lord now, he was originally a soldier in the battlefield. Therefore, when the magic item carriage approached, he was able to feel the large magic power from it.

As for Rei, he realised it was a magic item because it attracted his eyes, the same way as when he saw other magic items.

「Lord-sama, what do you mean?」

However, the aides who served the lord were basically civil servants and had no knowledge regarding magic items. Because the people who noticed that the carriage was a magic item were few, one of them asked Daska, his superior.

「Though you might not understand, the carriage itself is a considerably powerful magic item.」

「Really? Though I can use a bit of magic, I wouldn't think that the carriage would be a magic item at all.」

「I know right. A effect of concealment has been given to the carriage.Isn't that right Rei?」

The same as your robe, Daska seemed to hint.

(.....Did he notice? As expected of him.)

Rei had a look of astonishment because he didn't think that the effect of concealment granted by Esta Nord, one of the best alchemists, would be seen through.

Though Kuust turned his eyes to Rei for an instant at Daska's words, he didn't have the time to say anything as the carriage had nearly arrived where they were.

As the carriage stopped in front of Rei, Daska and Kuust, the man in the drivers seat jumped down skillfully.

The man waved his hand lightly at Kuust as he knocked on the door of the carriage. Similar to his build, he seemed to have a mild personality.

Seeing the childish wry smile on the face of the man, it was easy for Rei to understand that he was one of Kuust's acquaintances.

(And his body movements.....it's somewhat like Culotte's thief movements. In that case, is he the man that has the role of the thief for the General Princess?)

「Elena-sama, we've arrived at the city of Gimuru.」

「Umu~, thanks for your work.」

A voice was heard from inside and the door of the carriage opened. A person came out at the same time. The moment the appearance of the person could be seen, amazement spread from Daska's subordinates to the people further away, who were looking to see what was happening around the carriage.

Her golden blonde hair reflected the sunlight and her looks were the most beautiful the people around here had ever seen. Though normally, someone like that would be described as a doll, her sharp eyes displaying strength of will and mind proved that she was a living human. Furthermore, even though they were covered by her armour, it could not hide her sensual rich twin hills. In addition, when she got off the carriage and onto the ground, there wasn't a noticeable difference between her eye level and the eye level of the men in the surrounding area. In simple terms, she was considerably tall for a girl.

The men around her.....no, the women as well, first looked at her beauty. Then at her rich twin hills. Then finally at her tall stature.

As she was probably accustomed to drawing looks from everyone around her, she looked at the surroundings without minding it in particular.....among the people around the carriage she not only looked at their faces and build but the weapons and armour they had equipped as well. Aside from that, she also looked at the cloaks, shoes and other equipment they wore.

(Hou~, interesting.)

What attracted her interest was that that guy, Rei, was wearing the same Shoe's of Sleipnir that she was wearing. He was also wearing a robe which was a considerably high quality magic item. But more than anything else.....

(That person, is he really a human? It's as if an overwhelming amount of magic power took the form of a man. The fact that there's someone like this, as expected of the frontier.)

Noticing the magic power Rei possessed, she felt admiration in her mind. Magic taking human form, her thinking was coincidentally the same thought as what Firuma, the elf, thought of Rei.

Then, Rei moved his eyes from the magic items Elena was equipped with to her face.

Similarly, Elena moved her eyes across the magic items Rei had equipped and to his face.

It was really by chance. Rei happened to look at Elena and Elena glanced at Rei at the same time.....their two glances met.

「.....」

「-!？」

Nothing happened. The fact was that only their looks intersected each other.

However, the moment Rei looked at Elena, he unintentionally gave a look of astonishment while Elena reflexively drew in a breath.

From the point of view of the surrounding people, it was only a few seconds. But for the two people looking at each other, it felt like an hour. In that one

instant, they both had a strange feeling about the other.

Chapter 65

「Elena-sama, is there anything wrong?」

Ara, who got off the carriage after Elena, noticed that Elena had stopped moving and asked to see what she was looking at.

However, Elena said nothing and just quietly stared back at Rei's eyes.

「Elena-sama? What happened Elena-sama!?!」

Normally, Elena would respond immediately after she was called, but this time there was no response after calling her. As for how strange that was, it was obvious to Ara, who had served as Elena's escort and manager for the past few years.

Almost reflexively, Ara followed the the direction Elena was looking at.

There was a young man who wore a robe on his body.....no. He should be called boy as he was several years younger in comparison to herself.

For Ara, who idolized Elena, she did not care whether the other person was a noble or not. But out of her respect and admiration for Elena, when she felt that something had been done to Elena, she instinctively pulled out her sword from her waist and kicked against the ground, closing the distance to Rei.

「You, what did you do to Elena-sama!」

As the shout echoed into the surroundings, time began to move again for the people who had lost themselves while admiring Elena's looks.

It was the same for Rei and Elena who had been entwined in each others' gazes.

「-!?!」

By the time he had noticed the attack of the girl, he was already within her range. The girl swung her large sword.

Sucking in a quick breath, he reflexively backed away half his body to evade the sword swung down at his shoulder. Cutting through the air, the girl's sword

pierced the ground.

Looking at the sword, which was nearly 20cm into the ground, it was obvious that it had been swung down seriously with the intention to kill.

The moment the girl tried to pull out the sword that had cut into the ground, Rei put his foot onto the blade to hold it down. At the same time, he kicked the girl's right wrist, that was holding the sword with his left foot.

「Kyaa~!」

The girl gave a scream, that you wouldn't expect from someone who could bury a sword that deep into the ground, and released her grip on the sword due to the impact on her wrist. Without even looking at that, Rei took out the Death Scythe from the Misty Ring and poured magic power into the blade as he spun round to cut her neck.....

Kin~, the blade of the Death Scythe made a sound as it was repelled by something that came flying out of nowhere.

(What!?)

There hadn't been anyone nearby aside from the girl in front of him. Quickly looking at the surroundings while thinking that, though he didn't know when she had taken it out, the figure of Elena holding what looked to be the handle of a sword was reflected in his eyes.

However, it was a strange sword. Only the guard and hilt of the sword was in Elena's hand. A metallic whip with blades attached at regular intervals extended from where the blade would be in a normal sword.

(That's a sword whip.)

While feeling surprise that such a fancy weapon like a sword whip from Earth would appear in Elgin, he also had an expression of astonishment on his face.

After all, what it had just blocked wasn't an ordinary weapon. Made from the Magic Beast Art, it was a magic item made from the materialisation of his own magic power. Yes, it was a magic item created from an amount of magic power that even Zepairu was shock at. Furthermore, he had poured magic power into the Death Scythe when he attacked. Parrying or blocking normally was useless.

Even if it was blocked by a shield, it would cut smoothly through the shield in a single strike. The only way to escape death would be to evade it. Yet an attack like that was repelled.

As for Elena, she also was surprised.....no, she was struck with great astonishment. All of a sudden, one of her subordinates was attacked by a deadly strike. It was faster and stronger than any attack she had ever seen, an overwhelming attack. In fact, the hand she had used to block the attack was still numb from the impact. How many times could she block an attack like that. She felt a tingling down her spine as though like that.

(.....What is this?)

Anger, fear, impatience, sadness.....it was different from any of them. Yes, it was something she hadn't felt in a long time.....delight.

Though she had natural talent, Elena never neglected her training. There wasn't an opponent that she would have a hard fight against, even against generals from neighbouring countries. An opponent that could overwhelm her in a single attack. Elena's heart secretly rejoiced at meeting an opponent that could fight equally against her.

However, she immediately held back the joy rising inside her and immediately spoke up.

「Please wait a moment!」

A dignified voice echoed into the surroundings.

With that voice, the people in the immediate area, who had panicked at the situation, regained their composure.

Rei sensed something in the voice and didn't take any further action but held onto the Death Scythe, ready to fight.

While subtly smiling in relief at Rei's appearance, Elena spoke up in a dignified voice once again.

「What happened just now was a misunderstanding. I will apologise to you at a later time.Are you fine with that?」

She turned her gaze from Rei to Margrave Rowlocks, who was responsible for

the area as the lord of the city of Gimuru.

「That's fine if you're okay with it.Rei, do you have any objections?」
「.....No.」

Giving a small nod at Daska's words, he made a quick glance to the side.

「Set, it's okay.」
「Guru~」

At his voice, Set gave a short cry and walked towards Rei.

Where had Set been? The answer was that he had been holding off Kuust, who had readied his magic spear when he saw Rei trying to attack his colleague. The moment Kuust touched his magic spear, Set had dashed in front of him without a sound and restrained him with a sharp look.

「Guh!」

Even if he looked down on Rei, Rei had still tamed a Griffon. Kuust grimaced at his humiliation of having his movements sealed by it. However, it was a fact that though Set was casually walking back to Rei, Kuust still couldn't move due to Set's earlier glare.

Though he had his pride, Kuust wasn't stupid enough to ignore reality.

「.....Griffon, is it?」

As for Elena, she involuntarily leaked a voice as she saw it calmly pass by her.

An A rank monster, Griffon. The monster known as the shinigami of the sky was at such a place. Moreover, unbelievably, it was following someone.

「Margrave Rowlocks, that Griffon is.....」

Elena asked the lord of Gimuru, who had come near enough. In response to the question, Daska gave a small nod.

「That's the monster that follows the adventurer Elena-dono crossed weapons with earlier.」

「I'm sorry, I haven't studied much about Griffons but I've never heard of one following someone. Wouldn't rumors spread if there was a person like that? 」

「That's right. However, it hasn't been several months since he appeared on the

streets of Gimuru. The rumors might not have reached the Imperial Capital yet.」

「.....Hmm, that makes sense. In that case, was he waiting here because he will going with us to the dungeon?」

「That's right. I'll say this first, in accordance with your letter, this fellow meets the requirement being rank D. Any how, he reached rank D about a week ago.」

「Such a talented person? Ahh, I see. There's no helping it as he's only arrived in the city for a few months. No, should I say he's done well to rise to rank D in a few months.」

「It's due to his achievements in the Orc subjugation.」

「Though I had heard rumors that Orcs had settled down in a village.....indeed, if it's him he can certainly handle Orcs.」

She nodded in agreement as her right hand, which had gone numb after repelling the Death Scythe, began to regain a sense of touch.

If he had the ability to produce that much power in a single attack without difficulty, she was able to understand that he was able to fight against Orcs.

「Ah. In addition, because it was said that he defeated the Orc King who led the Orcs in single combat, I can guarantee his ability. As you can see, he is also accompanied by a Griffon.」

「An Orc King?I see, that strong. To be honest, I was a bit hesitant about this dungeon exploration, this is good. I'm looking forward to it.」

A feeling of joy welled up in her chest as Elena smiled. Daska saw that and, aware that his own cheeks had turned red due to the smile, cleared his throat while looking away.

「Mm, ahem. So, Elena-dono. If you don't mind, we would like to enter the city soon.」

「Ahh, of course I don't mind. After this, will we be meeting with that person in Margrave Rowlocks' residence?」

「Of course, arrangements have been made.」

「Thank you for that. I have to make Ara apologise.Ara is smart and reasonably strong but has reacts sensitively to anything to do with me. I didn't think she would suddenly slash out like this this time.Is it possible to ask about that person's name?」 TLN: I'm basically imagining a female version of

Rhodes.

Elena asked under the intention of accepting responsibility for the mismanagement of her subordinates, hiding her true feelings of wanting to know his name.

「That's right. Though it's scheduled for the person himself to give a detailed introduction of himself after we arrive at the residence.....well, a name would be fine. He's called Rei.」

「Rei, is it?」

Elena spoke out Rei's name in a murmur. In that situation, Ara came over and lowered her head.

「I'm sorry Elena-sama. Because of my selfish act.....」

A bit further away from Ara, who was bowing her head, Vel and Kuust could be seen.

「Hey, is that guy really D rank?」

「It seems so. Honestly, aside from his strength, with his personality, I don't want to stay too close to Elena-sama.」

「Certainly, his strength aside, his problematic character is a negative factor. Looking at his exchange with Ara, I don't think he will get along well with us. Is choosing another suitable person impossible?」

「.....Don't be too concerned about it Vel.」

「No, hasn't the dungeon area we are going not been explored yet? I would like to refrain from worry about the back while advancing through such a dangerous place.」

「Though I understand your meaning, any how, it was Margrave Rowlocks' personal recommendation. I will not decline it.」

「But!」

「What's wrong? It doesn't seem to be the usual you.」

「No, that's true. If you say I'm not the same as usual then I must not acting as usual. We all love Elena-sama as our superior. As you are the commander of the escort force, if you are okay with it, I won't say anything more.」

Next to the conversation that was going on in small whispers, Ara was reproved by Elena.

「Ara, honestly, I am not impressed with your behaviour this time」

「I'm very sorry. I've inconvenienced Elena-sama.....」

「It wasn't really an inconvenience for me. But after this, we will be formally introduced at the residence of Margrave Rowlocks. I want you to apologise properly for the earlier matter at that time.」

Elena said that while directing her sight to the man who was playing with the Griffon at a place further away.

「If you say so, Elena-sama.」

Following Elena's gaze and seeing the person who had almost killed her earlier, Ara gritted her teeth and nodded.

「According to what Margrave Rowlocks said, we will be entering the dungeon with that guy. You wouldn't like to enter the dungeon with an awkward atmosphere would you Ara?」

「-!? That guy.....is it?」

「Umu~. As for how strong he actually is, I think you experienced it yourself.」

At those words, Ara recalled Rei's skill from before. Remembering the attack that tore through the air, cold sweat poured down her back and forehead. In fact, if she hadn't been saved by Elena, Ara knew that her life would have really ended there. Although she felt he fell short of her revered superiour, the fact was that he was stronger than herself.

「Certainly, I recognise his ability. However, his abilities stand out too much. Though I am not concerned about nobility like Kuust, can you consider choosing someone a little bit more suitable?」

To Ara's words, Elena shook her head with a wry smile.

「In the first place, wasn't it was father who requested Margrave Rowlocks to give a recommendation? At any rate, it will be bad if we reject someone with such significant abilities. Rejecting someone like that would be too impolite to the other side.」

「But!」

As she raised her voice, 3 people emerged from the crowd.

「Oh? What is the General Princess doing here?」

A person with an innocent smile, like a mischievous boy that had become an adult, called out to Elena.

Over there was a person carrying a huge magic item battle axe. Next to him was a woman wearing a robe holding a cane, looking like an intellectual. Lastly was the figure of a youth who carried a long sword at his waist.

In other words, it was the A rank party, Axe of the Thunder God.

「Elk-dono? It's been a while. Since the case of the earth spirits. That reminds me, Elk-dono was based in the city of Gimuru as well.」

Elena had the smiling face of someone meeting their comrade after a long time. At the same time, Elk had an embarrassed smile while his wife Min smiled faintly. However, after seeing Elena's smile, Rhode's turned his red face away.

While smiling like a boy, Elk spoke up.

「Ah. The city of Gimuru is my home.So, what brings the General Princess to a frontier like this?」

「Please stop with the General Princess, Elena is fine. As for why, father instructed me to enter the dungeon. The reason I'm here is because of that.」

「.....The dungeon? Though I know that Elena is strong, isn't it another thing to enter a dungeon?Ahh, I see. So that's the reason you stopped by at the city of Gimuru. To hire a thief here.」

To Elks words, Elena shook his head and turned her sight to Rei, who was looking back at them with a surprised expression while stroking his Griffon.

「Margrave Rowlocks recommended him.」

「He.....wait, isn't that Rei?」

「Oh, you know him?」

「Ah. We worked together in the Orc village subjugation.I see, if it's him, then you might have the ability to manage yourselves in the dungeon. There's Set as well.」

「Oh, may I think that as a guarantee from Axe of the Thunder God?」

Surprised, Elena looked at Elk's expression for a moment, but understood immediately after recalling Rei's strength.

「That's right. Though there are various awkward areas, choosing him as part

of your personnel is no problem.」

「Is that so? I have confidence in your views. 」

Elk then called out to Daska, who was a bit further away from Elena and Ara, watching the conversation.

「Oh, isn't it Daska, what's Margrave Rowlocks doing in a place like this?」

「I'm here to welcome Elena-dono. Are you going somewhere?」

「Ah. It seems that a few trolls have appeared and several merchants have been attacked.」

「.....Ahh, speaking of that, it was raised as an urgent report. It surely is an urgent request. I'm sorry to detain you, please deal with the trolls as soon as possible. We will take heavy damage if merchants stop coming to the frontier.」

「Ahh, you can leave it to us. Then, see you later as well Elena.」

「Umu~. Because of the matter about the dungeon, I'll be staying in Gimuru for a while. Let's meet up again if there's a chance.」

「That's fine, I don't mind. From his open mouth, it looks like my son has a crush on you.」

「Dad!」

Though he shouted to his dad who suddenly said such a strange thing, his father avoided it by laughing it off as usual.

「Did you say that your son was called Rhodes? I'll say this first, the minimum requirement for me to be with him is for him to be stronger than me.」

「Kukuku~. A man that is stronger than the General Princess, who won fame in the surrounding countries.....」

Saying up to there, Elk suddenly turned to look at Rei.

「That's right, speaking of that, there's Rei. Is she serious about it?」

While muttering quietly in his mouth, he was about to say something.....when Min's cane swung down on his head.

「Elk, you're talking happily but I'm sorry, we don't have the time for that.」

「Oh, my bad. Well then, because of that, we'll get going now. Do your best to conquer the dungeon.Well, with Rei there should be no problems unless a serious issue comes up.」

Saying that, Elk and Min went towards the highway, Rhodes was entranced by Elena before panicking and chasing after them.

Elena saw them off and turned to speak to Ara again.

「Apparently that person has been guaranteed by Elk, who is an A rank adventurer. Do you still think there is a problem?」

「.....No. If Elena-sama says so, I will follow.」

After Ara reluctantly consented, Elena turned to Daska.

「In that case, Margrave Rowlocks. Can you guide us?」

「That's right, I should do that. We will be a nuisance to the people passing through the main gate if we stay here forever.」

Daska nodded and gave out the order to return to the lord's residence.

Chapter 66

The lord's residence in the city of Gimuru. Currently, Rei was waiting in a room.

Before entering the lord's residence, he had separated with Set at the gate. Set was probably taking a nap in the stables of the lord's residence now.

The season was changing from summer to autumn. The temperature outside had become milder compared to a few weeks before.

However, Set was a Griffon and he was able to spend summer and winter in his body without care.

Jealous. Rei thought that while looking around the room and drinking a cup of tea that a maid had served him after bringing him here.

Because this place was made as a frontier fort in case of emergencies rather than a lord's residence, there was hardly anything, if there was anything, in the dull room that would entertain Rei's eyes.

「Well, I knew this already.」

Muttering, he took out the book on dismantling monsters from the Misty Ring and started to read it.

Any how, after he had been guided to the of this barren room, he hadn't seen the presence of anyone else other than the patrolling guards in the corridors. No one other than the maid who had brought him tea had visited either.

(I got into a fight with the General Princess's escort and almost killed them..... if anything, this service is pretty good considering that.)

Thinking like that, he quietly read his book in the room.

After about an hour, the sound of knocking was suddenly heard from the door.

「Finally.」

Muttering, he stored the book back into the Misty Ring and answered the

door. A person who looked like a knight from the city of Gimuru appeared.

「You are Rei, no doubt?」

「Ah.」

「I'm sorry for keeping you waiting. Lord-sama is waiting so please follow me.」

Nodding at those words, Rei followed him after finishing his tea, which had gone cold.

He was guided to the room he had come to the previous day. The office where he had been attacked by Kuust right after he entered.

It was easy to recognise as the finely decorated door to the lord's work office was not something easily forgotten.

(Surely I won't be attacked this time.)

While thinking that, he judged that it wouldn't happen as the knight that was guiding him went ahead. Following the knight, he entered the room after knocking on the door with the door knocker outside the room.

「Sorry for taking so long to call you.」

Hearing Daska's apology as soon as he entered the room, Rei shook his neck.

「No, it's fine.」

「I see. That's good. Come over here.」

Daska sat down on the sofa in the room, Elena was sitting opposite. Her three escorts stood behind them so as to deal with any emergencies that might happen.

While observing the situation, the three people standing behind Daska looked at him with sharp gazes..

(Because of yesterday, I can understand Kuust. Same for the girl called Ara. However, I don't recall doing anything to the man who was driving the carriage.no, it can't be helped as I almost killed their companion.)

Rei moved next to Daska while muttering that in his mind.

However, he noticed that aside from the three escorts, one of the looks at him was friendly to an unnatural degree.

Tracing the friendly glance, it was from Elena, also known as the General Princess.

She had a beauty that couldn't be forgotten after a single look and a strong will in her eyes. She had a friendly look.....or rather, as Rei felt it, an interested look.

While thinking about that, he moved towards Daska and went to stand behind them at the back like the 3 escorts.....

「No, it's fine. Sit next to me.」

「But.....」

Commoners sitting next to nobles. Rei understood that such a thing was normally impossible. However, it was because of that that Margrave Rowlocks invited him without concern

In the end, Rei was almost forcibly pulled by Daska into the seat next to him.

And as if waiting for that timing, a maid put a cup of tea in front of Rei.

「Well then, well, although there was a variety of incidents.....」

Daska spoke up with a wry smile.

「Anyway, this guy will be Elena-dono's escort this time. Elena-dono, this person, Rei, is an adventurer who will be dispatched by the city of Gimuru as your escort. As for his ability, it goes without saying as he has crossed weapons with Elena-dono.」

「Umu~. My hand was numb for some time after parrying that blow. A person who can make an attack like that. His strength as an adventurer is first class, I have no complaints.」

「Thank you very much.」

Judging that there didn't look like there would be any particular penalty for the earlier matter, Rei bowed his head to Elena for taking care of it.

「No, this matter occurred because of a hasty judgement. Ara.」

Called by Elena, the female knight, who had inadvertently exchanged attacks with Rei a few hours ago, took a step forward.

「Rei-dono, I apologise for my misconduct for attacking you earlier based on

my hasty judgement.」

Though Ara bowed her head, dissatisfaction could clearly be seen in her eyes. It was only because she was told by Elena, who she idolized, that she reluctantly apologised.

However, Rei's ability was certainly not just that of a rank D adventurer. Though he couldn't bring a complaint against Ara, who held the social position of a knight, he nodded in response as he didn't feel need to blame her.

「No, I also attacked back on reflex. Don't worry about it. Let's just call it even.」

「.....Yes. Thank you very much.」

Giving a quick bow, Ara returned straight back to behind Elena. Glancing at the back of her subordinate for a moment, Elena gave a wry smile and spoke to Rei.

「Rei, may I call you that?」

「Yes.」

「I see. Then I will call you Rei. Don't misunderstand though, Ara doesn't have any hostility in particular for you. That is.....what should I say. Yes, she's strangely worried about me for some reason. Because of that, don't mind it too much. We will be people challenging the dungeon together in future, you wouldn't want it to get awkward over a trivial matter would you? If we're stuck in such a state, we won't survive in the dungeon.」

「That is true. I have the same opinion. Though I haven't entered a dungeon before myself, I have investigated it in various ways after receiving this request.....apparently, it isn't an easy place to go through.」

「That would be right. So, I want to start for the dungeon by the 6am bell tomorrow morning, are there any problems with that?」

「No, Because I've bought most of the necessary supplies this week after receiving the request, I can go at any time.」

Maybe he was unhappy with the way Rei asserted himself, Kuust interrupted with a snort.

「Hmph. Any time means nothing, are you planning to leave for the dungeon with only the clothes on your back?」

「.....Kuust, saying such things. You should have already seen it several times.」

He displayed the Misty Ring on his right arm to everyone around.

As for what it was, Daska, who gathered information from the guild and guards as the feudal lord of the area, was the first to guess.

「Hou~, is that an item box?」

「Yes.」

Item box, hearing those words, Elena looked at the bracelet on his arm seriously.

「Certainly, when you got into the altercation with Ara, you had taken that huge scythe out from nowhere.....so this is the item box. It's the first time I've seen one.」

At Elena's impressed murmurs, Kuust scrunched his eyebrows at his inability to see that it was an item box even after seeing the Death Scythe being taken out twice.

However, that was a matter of course. Item box magic items were scarce. If he hadn't seen with his own eyes that a rank D adventurer in a frontier city had one, he wouldn't have believed the story.

「As you can see, my preparations have been made and I'm ready at any time. Fortunately, Set is also here already as well.」

「.....Certainly, you seem to have everything ready. However, it isn't the same for us.」

To Kuust's words, Elena nodded.

「As for us, we haven't completed our preparations for challenging the dungeon.Rather than that, Rei. Can we transport our luggage in that item box? 」

From his experience in the Orc subjugation force, Rei nodded without being troubled in particular.

「There's no problem. However, because this Misty Ring is a special item box, I have to put the items in.」

「Special? In what way is it special? To begin with, this is the first time I've

seen an item box. It would be great if you could explain.」

Nodding at Elena's question, he removed the item box from his arm and placed it onto the table.

「In the case of an ordinary item box, everyone can use it. For example, Elena-sama can take out a potion that I put in. However, in the final processing of this item box, a special finishing was added so that it would react to the magic power of the owner. In other words, only I can take out the things I put into the item box. At the same time it isn't possible for other people to use this item box. It recognises it's owner by their magic power.」

「.....Hou~. That's great. Though there aren't many, there are also magic weapons that recognise their owner. For example, there's Kuust's magic spear.」

At those words, Elena replied while nodding with a smile.

「That's right. For example, though my weapon has been deposited before entering the lord's office, if someone other than me tried to use my magic spear, they wouldn't be able to cut anything with it and would only be able to use it as a club.」

Listening to his description, Rei noticed that other than Elena, no one else had a weapon.

(.....In that sense, that means that I, who have the Misty Ring, can bring weapons when meeting with people?)

Rei nodded in his mind. With the Misty Ring, he was certainly able to bring a weapon to any location. In other words, it was capable of bringing out the best of it's abilities in an assassination.

(Well, my purpose is collecting magic stones of monsters so there no possibility of me using it for assassinations purposes unless in extreme circumstances.)

「Anyway, because of this, I can take care of the transportation of supplies if you trust me with the item box.....what will you do?」

「There are no problems for me.....how about you all?」

Asked by Elena, Ara was the first to speak.

「If Elena-sama trusts him, I will follow.」

Followed by Vel.

「Mm, it's a bit sad but I can't trust people that I've just met. More so because we're challenging the dungeon. I'm against it.」

And finally, Kuust.

「I apologise to Margrave Rowlocks, who recommended him, but I'm of the same opinion as Vel.」

「Hm, then it's 2 in favour and 2 against.」

「Elena-sama, what will you do?」

「That's right, let's make it that I request Rei to do this using my authority. Though Vel and Kuust's opinions are justifiable, it will be fatal to have our movements slowed down with extra luggage while challenging the dungeon.」

There was no questioning Elena's words. The two people who objected also nodded.

「For that reason, tomorrow morning, we will gather our luggage at the front gate tomorrow morning for you to collect and transport.」

「I understand.」

「Ah, we should also check with each other what kind of combat style is best. Rei, would you be able to tell me yours?」

Rei nodded at the question as he returned the Misty Ring to his arm.

「That's right. In my case, I'm basically a magic warrior. That large scythe I displayed earlier is a magic item but can also act as a magic casting tool. As for what magic I can use, it's basically mainly fire magic.....」

(As for the skills attached to the Death Scythe, I should probably tell them it's magic for now. Is it enough to tell them about Flying Slash and Magic Shield? No, it's the first time I'm going to a dungeon. I don't want to be suspected as being suspicious if I have to use Corrosion in an emergency.)

「I can also use some auxiliary magic, wind magic and earth magic.」

「Hou~, you can use three attributes, fire, wind and earth with auxiliary magic on top of that. That's great.」

Elena nodded in admiration though he didn't want to draw attention to himself. Ara gave a sharp look at Rei that was mixed with envy.

「Other than fire, it's only to the level of being usable. As for the large scythe, it's called the Death Scythe and is the magic item that I mainly use in combat.」
「It seems to be that way. Though the effect of concealment has been granted, your robe is also a high quality item. The bracelet on your left arm also seems to be some sort of magic item and your shoes are also something I am familiar with.」

Saying so, Elena directed her gaze to Rei's feet. Rei also followed her gaze to what was worn on his feet.....

「Shoes of Sleipnir?」
「That's right. It looks like they're the same.」
「.....Certainly. However, I heard from my teacher that the Shoes of Sleipnir were a considerably valuable item, you did well to obtain them.」

Rei said that while recalling his backstory.

「Though no doubt it certainly is valuable, it's not an item as valuable to the extent of an item box that may not even be seen once in a lifetime. However, you did even better, Rei, to get your hands on a pair of the shoes. 」
「For me, it was handed to me from my master.」
「Ah, you said that your master threw you out after your learning was finished? I've heard about it to some extent from Margrave Rowlocks. After your learning, it's no wonder that you managed to improve yourself to rank D in this short period of time.Now then, then it's our turn. If anything, I'm similar to Rei. I'm a magic warrior that is skilled in medium range combat with a sword whip and magic. My strong attribute is wind.」

(Even though she's also a magic warrior, the Death Scythe is close range. Her medium range is also clearly different from my long range when I cast magic. The ability to swing the Death Scythe that weighs over 100kg might be more reliable in combat.)

「Our fighting styles resemble each other. I would like to request a match sometime soon.」
「That's fine. If there is an opportunity.」

Seeing Rei nod, Elena had a happy smile. Though Rei involuntarily admired the beautiful smile, he pulled himself back together at Elena's voice.

「Next, Ara.」

「Yes, Elena-sama. I am a knight, my weapon is a long sword, which you saw earlier. Because I'm a pure vanguard, my best regards to Rei-dono as I will likely be fighting together with you.」

Rei remembered the events that had happened in front of the main gate. Certainly, that attack that didn't seem to correspond with her delicate appearance and had the power to bury the blade into the ground. If that sword had been swung from the side against a monster, it would probably cut it in two.

「Kuust.」

「As I said earlier, my weapon is a spear, I mainly serve as the middle guard for Elena-sama. I can also use a sword but it only serves as a spare weapon. I also serve as the healer of the unit because I am skilled at water magic.」

He must have been greatly mortified that he had lost to Rei. Kuust's words implied that he was defeated yesterday because he was using a sword, which he wasn't familiar with. Rei felt uneasy about the journey to the dungeon while sighing in his mind over Kuust's uselessly high pride.

「Vel.」

「I'm basically a rear guard that uses a bow. There are also times when I can take the vanguard using daggers, I can also use earth magic to some extent. You can think of me as something like what the adventurers call a thief.」

(Indeed, as I thought, they have a person who has the skills of a thief. Does this mean I don't need to worry about traps?)

「The previous people will be challenging the dungeon along with you Rei. Though it may only be a short while, my best regards.」

Rei grasped the outstretched hand. Her hand was feminine and slender, which didn't seem to suite the person referred to as the General Princess. If you grasped a sword normally and repeatedly fought in combat, callouses would form, but there were none of them. Rei guessed that it was probably due to healing magic.

In this way, Rei's first meeting with Elena was concluded.

The next day, the five finally departed for the dungeon.

Chapter 67

It was early morning, the day after Rei met with Elena at the lord's residence. Rei was walking down the main street in his usual getup of the Dragon Robe and the Shoes of Sleipnir.

The figure of Set was next to him as usual as well. However, Set's shoulders had drooped somewhat regretfully.

As they had to get to the main gate before 6am, hardly any of the food stalls along the main street were open yet. Though the kind of stalls that sold soup to those who had to work early in the morning, it was difficult to eat that while walking. Of course, though there might be places that sold sandwiches if you looked for them, unfortunately, there weren't any along Rei's path.

「Guru~.....」

Seeing a group of night shift guards eating soup with great relish at a nearby stall, Set gave an envious cry.

Rei stroked Set's head with a wry smile at the situation.

「I've been given your share of food for lunch that was prepared at the inn, it will be time for breakfast after we meet with Elena and head for the dungeon.」

「Gururu~」

「Well, even if I say that, the box lunch for Set is only enough for one meal..... because I placed the meat from the monster we hunted up to now into the Misty Ring, we're not likely to run into food troubles. I would also like to keep hunting as we go to the dungeon for Set's meals if possible.」

Speaking like that as he continued walking, he arrived at the main gate as usual.

Unusually however, it was an ordinary guard that was dealing with Rei today rather than Ranga, the captain of the guards.

「Good morning. Your guild card and Necklace of Subservient Monster.」

「Ah. Ranga always deals with me, did something happen today?」

Removing the Necklace of Subservient Monster from Set, he asked as he handed it over along with the guild card.

The guard had a wry smile as he received them.

「Though Captain Ranga is here most of the time, it doesn't mean he's here all the time every day. Because the captain is on holiday today, I'm in charge.」

「I see, I though Ranga had become in charge of me.....well, I guess maybe not.」

「Yeah. Well.....to be honest, when Rei-kun came for the first time, I was surprised and scared of the Griffon, you could say I've gotten used to it now after seeing it many times. I mean, I want to say.....」

For an instant, the guard glanced at Set.

「Guru~?」

Maybe he felt it, Set tilted his head to one side and looked back at the guard.

「.....Looking at his innocent appearance and staying away makes me feel like I'm bullying him.....I also have a younger brother who will happily tell me about playing with Set downtown. So because that happened.....」

Looking around, after making sure there was no one around other than Rei, he took out a piece of dried meat from his chest and held it out to Set.

「I'm sorry for being scared until now. Here, a sign of reconciliation.」

「Gururururu~」

Set put the dried meat into his mouth while giving a small cry.

The guard looked on warmly like he was looking at a child and his smile changed to a wry one.

「But though I've gotten used to Set.....this is still a bit scary. Is it possible to communicate right away with Griffons other than Set? If Gabriele approached one with his current way, he would probably be blasted away. 」

「.....Certainly, it's not good to get too accustomed to it. However, in the first place, would high ranking monsters like Griffons come out to a place where there are so many humans?」

「Though that certainly is so, this is the frontier so there's a chance of it happening.Yes, here. Your guild card has been checked. Take care.」

After his guild card was returned, Set gave a happy cry as they left the guard and went out the main gate.

The horse drawn carriage that they had seen yesterday was already there.

「It's still a bit earlier than the arranged time.....you did well to come, Rei.」

Greeting Rei and Set was the cheerful figure of Elena.

Rei held his breathe for a moment as he saw her pretty face lit up by the morning sun, but pulled himself back together immediately.

「Good morning, Elena-sama. I got here earlier than I expected. So, will we immediately head for the dungeon?」

「No, please wait for a while. Vel is running an errand and seems to be a bit late.」

(Vel, if I'm not mistaken, they said he was the scout and thief of the unit. Is he investigating something regarding the dungeon? Well, if we're going to the dungeon, a thief is indispensable, I can't complain if he's late.)

「I understand. Let's wait then.」

「Umu~.....That's right, I've wanted to do it since yesterday, but can I stroke the Griffon?」

「Guru~?」

At her sudden interest, Set looked at Elena while tilting his head.

「Elena-sama! No matter what you say, it's too dangerous. Even if it's tamed, a monster is still a monster. What will we do if something happens to Elena-sama?」

As Ara warned Elena, Kuust, who had ignored Rei's existence, also spoke up.

「It's as Ara says. A monster is a monster. It's too dangerous to touch carelessly, even if it's been tamed.」

To the two peoples' advice against it, Elena stroked Set's head without caring as she spoke up.

「However, won't we will be entering the dungeon with this Griffon? Then I don't think it's a bad idea to get used to each other.」

「Gurururu~」

Maybe the strokes were good, Set gave a cheerful cry.

「Hou~, if you look at it this way the Griffon, the shinigami of the sky, looks pretty cute.」

As Rei looked at the situation, he took out a sandwich from the Misty Ring that Lana had packed for Set this morning when they left the inn.

「Elena-sama, have this.」

「Hey, are you seriously trying to make Elena-sama eat such a coarse thing!?!」

Looking at the sandwich in Rei's hand, Kuust spat out a disgusted sigh rather than getting angry.

Ara, who was nearby, looked at Rei with a confused look.

「Don't misunderstand. This is a sandwich for set.」

Cutting off the other 2 people he presented the sandwich to Elena again.

「If you're fine with it, do you want to try feeding him?」

「Hou~. This is interesting, I've never fed a monster until now. Hey, Set. It's your meal.」

「Gurururu~」

Set took the sandwich that was offered by Elena into his mouth. Elena's hand went out to Rei again. He had felt her hands the day before and they didn't appear to be those of a warrior.

「Hm? Why are you staring at my hands?」

「No, I was thinking that your hands are pretty beautiful even though they have the strength to parry my attack.」

「.....Hey, you. Stop it. You've been too familiar with Elena-sama since before.」

Kuust pointed the tip of his magic spear at Rei while saying so.

However, he was stopped by Elena.

「It's fine. Though I said it many times yesterday, we will be acting with him in the dungeon for a while. If he can demonstrate his ability, then that is enough.However, I'll say this now but if you want to make any advances on me, do it after your strength is at least stronger than me.....」

Saying that to Rei, Elena immediately saw her own hand.

Yes, she was barely able to parry the attack from him yesterday. That meant.....

「.....No, nothing at all. There's also your Griffon, Set was it? For a monster to be so friendly after being tamed is unusual.」

「Yeah. Thanks to his high popularity with the children and residents in the city, everyone will come to feed him just by walking through the streets.」

「Fufu~. Well, I understand with this loveliness.」

For several times after that, Elena received a sandwich from Rei and gave it to Set.

「Gururururu~」

Set gave a cheerful cry and Elena smiled.

Although Rei was fascinated by Elena again, he pulled himself back together.

「Elena-sama, anyhow, I want to be able to store all the items into the item box before Vel gets back.」

「Hm? Ahh, that reminds me. You can certainly store everything in the spare time we have now. Ara.」

「I understand. Should I guide him into the carriage?」

「Umu~. All necessary luggage should have been placed inside the carriage.」

「Yes, there are no problems.」

「Then I'll leave it to you. I'll be playing with Set for a while here.」

「Yes.Rei-dono, please come.」

「Even if you say it's a carriage.....」

Though Rei had a wondering look while listening to the exchange between the two people, because Ara didn't explain anything, he followed after her.

And reaching the front of the carriage, the door was casually opened as she went inside. Rei, who followed, was dumbfounded as entered the carriage and looked around.

「This is.....」

Judging from the outside, it looked like a normal carriage that could seat 6

people, however what was inside was beyond his imagination.

Speaking from Rei's perspective, it was more than 30 tatami in area. The furniture that was inside was expensive looking and it was equipped with a kitchen for simple cooking.

「Were you surprised? This is something Duke Kerebel prepared for the Miss. It's a magic item that was created by dozens of the best alchemists from the Magic City Osus over several years for the price of 50 light gold coins. Because it is a unique, one of a kind item, it is even rarer than Rei-dono's item box.」

Magic City Osus. It was a city state located near the center of the continent. It was the city that had the leading and eminent magician training schools. Osus maintained its independence from neighbouring countries with the backing of the strength of its magicians. Moreover, since alchemists gathered there, it was known for exporting good quality magic items.

「Yes, this is certainly amazing. The reason is that the space inside the body has been expanded and fixed with space magic. You would need a highly developed technology to fix a space of this size. Furthermore, the body itself has also been given the effect of concealment to prevent others from recognising it as a magic item. It's even equipped with a magic item for use in the kitchen.」

「That's right. Anyhow, Elena-sama is not just wandering the battlefield as the General Princess, because she also had to do monster exterminations, Duke Kerebel arranged this to allow her to rest her weary mind and body at any time.Anyway, the luggage is here.」

Seemingly satisfied with Rei's surprised look, she guided him towards a corner in the interior of the carriage. Over there was a mountain of tents, food, water, cooking utensils, potions, abnormal state recovery medicine and other items.

「Certainly this is enough to share with everyone.」

「Yeah, because of that, we'll leave it to Rei-dono.」

Should he say as expected of the items prepared by the daughter of a marquis, most of the supplies boasted of high quality goods.

「Indeed, I guess I should say.」

Whether she heard the admiration in his words, Ara nodded as if it was natural.

「Of course. Because Elena-sama will be using them and not just us. Also about the time. Can you store it quickly?」

Nodding at Ara's words, he stopped his movements as he noticed something when he reached for the potion.

「By any chance, should I not store these and just store the body of the carriage to take them into the dungeon?」

At Rei's natural question, Ara shook her head.

「Because this carriage is a magic item, including the reins tying the war horses, you can't just remove the body.Though I heard that living things can't be stored into item boxes, is yours different Rei-dono?」

「No, I can't store living creatures.However, it might be dangerous to just leave this in a place near the dungeon even if you say that it's been given the effect of concealment.」

Because people gathered near the vicinity of a dungeon, a simple town.....no, something like a village was built. To repel the attacks of monsters at night, the number of adventurers who resided there were not few. Adventurers challenging the dungeon would take a rest there, fix their equipment or sell off materials they gathered from the dungeon to merchants who wanted to purchase them. At the same time, there were also places such as stables and parking areas to leave animals and carriages there as the people went to the dungeon on foot. Rei's comment indicated that as it was an expensive magic item, some people or adventurers might get involved in a crime to earn some easy money. However Ara gave a smile.

.....Of course, if anything, the smile was closer to a grin.

「As I said earlier, this carriage is an item made by the concentrated efforts of the magicians from the Magic City Osus. Do you think this magic item has no preventative measures against thieves?」

「.....I can guess from your words.」

Aside from the detailed effects, Rei was easily able to imagine that any person

who tried to meddle with this carriage was unlikely to have a good experience.

「Well then, we'll end the talk here. Please hurry with storing the luggage soon, before Vel gets back.」

Maybe she lowered her guard somewhat when boasting about the carriage, Ara's manners softened. Though there was quite a bit of luggage, it was stored into the Misty Ring. When they finished, they left for the dungeon as soon as Vel returned.

Chapter 68

「Elena-sama, tea.」

Ara sat down after placing a cup of tea on the table in front of Elena, who was reading a book.

「Umu~.」

Elena carried the cup of tea to her mouth while turning the pages of the book.

While watching this situation, Rei turned his eyes to the inside of the carriage.

Even though it hardly shook and gave off the feeling that where staying in a room somewhere, they were advancing to the dungeon without mistake.

「Should I say, as expected of nobility.」

To those words that were murmured involuntarily, Kuust, who was also reading a book on a couch near Elena, glanced at him for an instant before going back to his book without saying anything in particular.

Though he had openly glanced at Rei when the carriage first started moving away from the city of Gimuru, after being warned by Elena, he began to treat Rei as if he didn't exist.

It should be noted that the carriage was currently driven by Vel, who wasn't inside the carriage.

This had been the original distribution of roles and he hadn't needed to say anything in particular before they left. Though Rei had asked if a guard at the drivers seat was necessary, Elena told him that one of the effects of the carriage was to alert the people inside when it sensed hostility.

Because of that function, Rei quietly stayed inside the carriage. At the same time, as Set was walking alongside the carriage, he judged that Set would give a cry in the case of an emergency if they were attacked.

On the other hand, if any monsters or bandits did attack, they would end up as food for Set or corpses left out in the open if they were bandits.

「What's wrong Rei. You don't seem to be too comfortable.」

Elena called out to Rei, who didn't seem to know what to do. It was natural that Rei was unable to settle down as he had never been in such a luxurious carriage.

「Because it's the first time I've been in such a wonderful carriage, I'm a bit tense.」

「Hmm, such a thing. However, it will take about 2 days to get to the dungeon. Because you'll get used to it sooner or later, you should feel at ease and enjoy the journey.If you like, I can lend you a book?」

「No, I also have some books for now.」

Elena nodded at his words, impressed. Books in this world are mostly hand copied, because of that, the cost of one book was quite a bit. Even the cheap ones were several silver coins. If it was the rare ones, it could cost several platinum coins.

「Any how, because I learned things like combat techniques and magic at my master's place, it was necessary for me to learn about how to strip the materials of monsters I killed in order to keep working as an adventurer.」

「Is that sort of thing common for adventurers? Usually, the more experienced people would teach the newer people in the Knights. Ara, how about you?」

Including the case with carriage before, Elena asked Ara in order to soften her attitude towards Rei.

Though the memory of almost being killed the day before remained strong for Ara, after one night, she understood that she had overreacted and didn't keep a stubborn attitude like Kuust.

(In this sense, the main problem is Kuust and Vel. Especially is Kuust's high pride as a noble, he tends to look down on people who are not part of the aristocracy.If I can, I should eliminate this problem with that guy called Rei.

While Elena thought about that, while pretending to read a book.....Rei turned his eyes to Kuust to see if he was planning to harm him somehow.

For Elena, the person called Kuust was a very reliable subordinate if not for his particularly high pride as a noble. Even among the knights of Duke Kerebel,

he possessed greater skill with the magic spear. Elena did not worry about being betrayed and could feel at rest on the battlefield with him due to his pride as a noble and his adoration towards her.

While Elena thought about that, Ara spoke about her experience when she first joined the knights.

「That's right. After I joined Duke Kerebel's knights, I was taught various things by the seniors. For example, advice on where the armour used for training was stored and advice about combat.....no mistake, it might have been impossible to keep up with the training if I didn't hear from the seniors.」

「That's right. Being in the Knights was like that, is it different for adventurers?」

At Elena's words, Rei remembered the time he registered with the guild.

If he had been able to interact with the Claws of the Hawk, who had picked a fight with him, perhaps it would have become like what Ara had talked about. But.

「Though it wasn't that there were no opportunities, I'm not very good at socialising as I had grown up with just Set and my magic teacher until several months ago.」

「I see. It doesn't seem to be that way when I talk with you though.」

「When meeting with people, there are some that I don't fit in well with. It's not so with Elena-sama though.....」

Rei glanced at Kuust for an instant.

Elena and Ara saw that and nodded in agreement.

「Well, because that's how it was at the guild in the beginning, I had no choice but to study and learn by myself.However, after that, I have exchanged knowledge about adventuring with everyone from Axe of the Thunder God, who Elena-sama also knows.」

「So then, Rei, I heard that you met Elk during the time the subjugation force went to the Orc village?」

Maybe she became interested, Elena closed her book while sipping her tea.

Or maybe she was just taking care of Rei, who seemed to be a bit uncomfortable in the carriage.

Ara noticed the interest of her superior who she revered and, with some envy, kept quiet to listen to hear the story about the Orc village subjugation, which she had heard some rumors about from Vel.

「Well, that's not wrong. In fact, if Elk wasn't there, the possibility of the Orc village subjugation request failing would have been quite high.」

「No? I heard that Rei defeated the Orc King?」

「The one who killed the Orc King certainly was me. But a C rank party called Scorching Wind was also there. However, cornering the Orc King to run away from the village was because of Elk.....I mean, the work of Axe of the Thunder God.」

「Please continue.」

「In the first place, Axe of the Thunder God was located at the most prominent place in the Orc village during the night attack. So they attracted and beat down all the Orcs that were in the village.....should I say as expected of an A rank party, they gathered the most Orcs and fought with them without taking a step back. Because of that, the Orcs in the village couldn't defeat Elk. Finally, the Orc King judged that there wasn't a chance of winning and tried to slip away from the village with his close aides and a few of his subordinates. Following that, Set and I found them from the sky and defeated them in cooperation with Scorching Wind, who were nearby.」

「.....I see. Though I heard from the story that it would surely have been impossible if Elk wasn't there.....would it have been really impossible?」

Zokuri~

At Elena's casual words, Rei felt an ice cold chill go down his spine.

Yes, she was asking if Rei had the means to deal with the Orc village by himself.....no, she was asking if he could do it with Set and himself. However, though Rei could burn down the entire village in that case, he would have to use his magic to his greatest ability.

「The incident with Ara yesterday. Though I parried that large scythe you used, it was a heavy attack. I also felt the magic power from you. If I think about it.....no, it's fine. It's pointless to talk about such things. Right?」

At Elena's words, Rei repressed his restlessness and tilted his head as if

confused.

「Well, I really don't understand what you're talking about.」

However, seeing Rei's look, Elena gave a wry smile.

「I'm not good at expressing myself without actions, you don't seem to be good at it either.Well, fine. Instead, what I want to say is, let's have a spar after we camp for tonight.Do you mind?」

「I don't think there's particular need to have a spar though.」

「Why not. Won't we be challenging the dungeon together after this? There's no disadvantage in knowing each others abilities.I mean, we should at least find out the bare necessities.」

「Kuust should know enough about my ability. Ara would be the same.」

Hearing that, Kuust looked at Rei with an annoyed look. Ara looked at her revered superior, Elena, with a wry smile.

「Rei-dono, it's impossible to stop Elena-sama so just give up. 」

Ara told him it was impossible and advised him to give it up.

In other words, it was already decided that he would have to fight a mock battle with her. Rei nodded with a sigh.

「In understand. It certainly isn't good if challenge the dungeon in future without knowing each others abilities. I will shoulder the task.」

「I see, that's great. Well then, I'm looking forward to tonight, it's not too long to wait for. Rei, you should fix up your physical condition for tonight.」

「.....Yes.」

Just as he answered, the sound of a whistle suddenly echoed through the carriage.

「This is?」

It was Ara who answered Rei's curious mutter as she took her sword out of the sheath at her waist with a serious look.

「Rei-dono, this is the sound that happens when someone tries to harm the carriage, it's one of the effects that has been given to it.」

「In other words, an attack?」

「Maybe. We'll know if the enemy is a monster.....or not.....?」

Her words were interrupted as the sound of the whistle in the carriage abruptly cut off.

「Umm.....that is?」

Ara was confused when the whistle was suddenly cut off. Kuust went to the window that opened to the drivers seat and called out.

「Vel, what happened?」

「Ah, about that. We were attacked by an Iron Snake.....」

「What!?!」

Kuust went back to grab his magic spear at once after hearing Vel's words. However, Vel stopped him.

「No, it's fine, it's fine. Hey, can you see it?」

Following Vel's glance, he saw the huge snake, twice as long as Set, with its head crushed by the sharp eagle claws of the Griffon.

Because the head of the Iron Snake had been crushed, the contents in its skull had splattered into the surroundings.

「The Iron Snake has basically been killed.As expected of a Griffon.」

Iron Snake. Though it was a monster with a low E rank, it had a high defensive strength contrary to its low attack power.

Matching its name, its body was covered in iron like scales, it had the defensive strength to completely block the weapons of low ranking adventurers. On the other hand, hammers, clubs and axes were able to hurt it somewhat due to the destructive power of the shock injuring it internally.

In contrast, despite its high defensive power, its main methods of attack were constriction, biting and sweeping with its tail, just like an ordinary snake. In addition, because its fangs had no poison, the monster's offensive ability wasn't something to worry about. However, with a sturdy defense and inexhaustible stamina, the resulting combination was a monster that wasn't strong but was troublesome to deal with.

However, it was unable to withstand an attack from Set, who was a Griffon

equipped with the Bracelet of Herculean Strength, a magic item that increased his strength, and quickly died.

「Gurururu~」

Set's cry could be heard as Kuust opened the door.

When Rei heard the cry filled with expectation, he gave a wry smile and spoke up to Elena.

「Elena-sama, do you mind if I get off the carriage for a little while to do something for Set?」

「Yes? What, this suddenly. Will an Iron Snake come out?」

Elena asked while putting her hand at the sword whip sheathed at her waist.

「Set seems to have killed the Iron Snake and he is asking me to store it.」

「Store it?」

「It's going to be Set's dinner tonight.」

「.....Ah, I understand. I see. Food is needed because Set is a living creature. But an Iron Snake?」

「That's right. Though there is a variety of food for Set's meals in the item box, because of the amount he eats, it never hurts to gather some locally.」

「Hmm, well that's fine. Kuust.」

「I understand.」

At Elena's voice, Kuust called out to Vel in the driver's seat to stop the carriage.

Rei got off the carriage after making sure it had stopped.

「Guru~」

Rei praised and stroked Set, who had pushed his head towards him, before storing the Iron Snake inside the item box.

「Heh~, that's convenient.」

Vel's admiring voice could be heard as he saw the situation. Rei turned to look at Vel as he gave a piece of dried meat to Set.

「Ah well. As a solo adventurer, he's more than enough help.Oh, my bad. We'd better get going at once.」

「Certainly.You too, though it may be difficult, can you try to get along with Kuust if you can? It's because he has such a character that he has few friends.」
「Well, it's up to him.」

After speaking with Vel for a moment, he went back inside the carriage.

(Though I thought he disliked me.....maybe not?)

He left with such questions in his mind.

Chapter 69

It was the first night after departing from the city of Gimuru. Rei and Elena had left the carriage to set up camp at a vantage point before the sun had fully set.

However, because Elena and Ara were going to stay inside the room in the carriage, the only people who would be sleeping outside were the three men.

Kuust and Vel had set up their own tent while Rei was setting up a tent for himself a bit further away.

「Sorry about that, Kuust's selfishness that is.」

Vel called out as he approached Rei, who was setting up his tent.

The manner in which he apologised with a light tone while raising his hand was hardly like a noble. At the very least, there would be few people who could tell that Vel was a noble at the same level as Kuust.

Though the three men were originally going to use one big tent, because Kuust strongly opposed it, Rei set up a tent that he had stored in the Misty Ring for himself.

However, Rei didn't mind and rather welcomed it as he didn't want to breathe the same air as Kuust, who was clearly looking down on him.

While driving tent pegs into the ground to stop the tent from falling over, Rei turned to look at Vel, who had called out in a light tone.

Vel's tone didn't seem to have any feelings of avoiding him like Rei had felt back in the city of Gimuru. Rei shook his head while questioning that in his mind.

「What, don't mind it. In the end, he and I are not too agreeable. In addition.....」

Glancing for a second, he looked at Set who was pulling the opposite side of the tent to stop it from falling over.

「He doesn't get along with Set more than me. Considering the possibility of

strange issues occurring, it's better to rest in a separate tent」

「I feel better after you said that. You may not have seen it but Kuust has his good points. Well, he rarely shows them to people who aren't nobles.....」

While talking about that, the peg was driven in and the tent completed.

「As expected of an adventurer, you're accustomed to doing this.」

「Really?」

「Gurururu~」

As Rei and Vel were talking, Set gave a cry and lightly pulled Rei's Dragon Robe.

Rei, who understood what Set wanted from his cry, looked back to Vel

「I'm sorry, it seems Set is a bit hungry. I'll leave for a bit to deal with the Iron Snake I stored during the day.」

「Ahh, I understand. I'll inform Elena-sama so take your time. You might become mentally tired if you act solo for such a long time.」

「Well, I have worked in groups such as during the Orc subjugation and rank up test.」

Saying so, he moved a bit further away along with Set.

At the same time, tilted his head as he remembered the conversation he just had.

(Vel was certainly wary about me yesterday, there's no doubt about that. However, why has that gone in a single day? Ara was basically the same, she idolises Elena.....rather, because of her adoration, she probably let go of her caution due to a few words. However, Vel doesn't look to be such a person. Not to mention he's the thief of the party.....well, that's fine. In the end, I'm only a guard dispatched by the city of Gimuru to join this temporary party, it's not necessary to poke my head into other things.)

While thinking like that, the reason for Vel's nice behaviour and conversation remained in his mind.

「Guru~?」

What's wrong, Set seemed to say as he looked at Rei. Rei shook his head

slightly and took the Iron Snake out of the Misty Ring.

At the same time, he took out the book that listed how to strip materials, a book that he hadn't taken out for a while.

Set stated motionlessly while waiting for the stripping of the materials to be completed. The looking at the situation from the side, it looked more like a friendly dog than a Griffon with a lion's body.

Rei looked through the book while unconsciously smiling.

「Um, the proof of subjugation for an Iron Snake is its fang.....haa, it's not there.」

Any how, its head had been crushed by Set's brute strength. Its fangs had disappeared somewhere along with its head.

「Guru~.....」

「Ah, nevermind. Anyone can make mistakes.」

While stroking Set, who was in a depressed mood, he continued reading about the materials.

「Material is.....its skin. Well, because its defensive power is enough to call it an Iron Snake, it can easily be used as protective gear.」

Muttering, he pulled out the Mithril Knife from his waist. As it was called an Iron Snake, he didn't use his usual knife for stripping materials. The reason was because it would be difficult to skin it with an ordinary knife blade.

That way, while putting magic power into the blade of the Mithril Knife, he stuck the knife into the neck of the Iron Snake and began to skin it.

Previously, Rei had been bad at stripping materials. But after Elk, the leader of Axe of the Thunder God, taught him some tricks during the Orc subjugation, his skills had progressed significantly compared to before. Although there were bits and pieces of flesh stuck to the skin, its final condition was completely different to when he skinned the Water Bear.

「Now then. Next is.....」

Starting a fire with magic, he substituted some branches from trees growing nearby as skewers and roasted the meat of the Iron Snake that he had cut up

with the Mithril Knife. Although the only seasoning used was salt, Set held the hot snake meat in his beak and swallowed it without caring. It should be noted that though Set ate the magic stone that was taken out, sadly, no new skills were learned.

「Gurururu～」

Set ate the meat that Rei cut up while giving a joyful cry. The footsteps of four people were then heard from behind.

Because he knew who they were by their number, he didn't mind the looks of amazement as he handed Set another piece of roasted snake.

「.....A monster that likes cooked meat. I thought for sure they only ate raw meat.」

Turning around, as expected it was Elena and the other three. They looked with surprised eyes as Set cheerfully stuffed the roasted meat of the Iron Snake into his mouth.

Hearing Elena's voice, Rei threw a roasted piece of meat to Set with a wry smile.

「Guru～!」

The meat that flew through the air was caught in Set's beak and went into his mouth.

「Because he's lived for a long time with me, he knows that the meat I grill is delicious. An ordinary Griffon would probably eat raw meat.」

「Umu～. Though I've have a lot of experience fighting monsters, I don't recall any of them eating cooked meat.」

「Ah, Elena-sama. I remember reading in a book that Fire Dragons roast their prey with Fire Breath before eating.」

「Hou～. I certainly did hear that there are some dragon species who have an intelligence greater than humans. That may be true if I think about it.」

Elena nodded with an interested look at Ara's words.

Ara laughed happily at the fact that she was able to attract Elena's interest.

While watching the situation, Rei saw that Set had finished eating the last of

the Iron Snake's meat and turned towards Elena again.

「Well then, Elena-sama. Did you have any reason to come all the way over here?」

「Umu~. As I said during the day, I want to have a spar with you.」

Kin~, Elena flipped open the sheath of the sword whip at her waist with her finger.

Even that causal gesture would attract looks from the public due to her beauty and charisma.

However, Rei gave a wry smile and cut off his attraction to her before taking some distance from Elena.

「Guru~?」

As Set looked at Rei curiously, Rei stroked Set lightly on the head and told him not to worry, before taking the Death Scythe out of the Misty Ring and readying it.

「I understand, a promise is a promise, I'll keep you company.As this is a mock battle, using magic will have a higher degree of risk. Because Elena-sama is my employer, do you mind if we use weapons only」

「Muu~, but I want to see Rei's magic abilities.....」

Though Elena said that dissatisfied, Ara's words fell like thunder.

「Elena-sama, it's as Rei says. What would you do if your beautiful skin got scarred!」

「Well, well, calm down Ara. In the first place, isn't it Elena-sama? It wouldn't be so easy for her to get hurt.」

Although Vel replied in a light tone, a dissenting opinion came from an unexpected person.

「No, I agree with Ara's opinion.」

「.....Kuust, did you also eat something strange?」

「Hmph, I am purely appraising his ability. Though I said it yesterday, personality aside, his abilities are pretty good.No, I'm saying too much.」

「That good?」

「What, didn't you see the case yesterday Vel?」

「Of course I saw it. You mean when Ara recklessly charged forward to cut Rei?」

「Guh.....」

Because no matter what she said, it was a fact that what she had done was reckless, Ara wasn't able to answer back. However, even if you said that Ara had significantly less ability as a guard than the rest of them in their group of nobles, she still had the power to fight back.....adding to that, because they had gone to a city that was ruled by a small number of people, there was no helping that she overreacted a little.As to whether it was excessive was another thing.

Elena, who was listening to the conversation of the three, spoke up with a sigh.

「It seems better to accept Rei's opinion so as to not worry Ara. That's fine, let's spar with weapons only then.」

Unsheathing the sword whip from the sheath at her waist, Elena pointed it at Rei.

Rei saw that and held the Death Scythe with both hands, ready to react at any time.

『.....』

Both of them watched each others distance in silence while waiting for an opportunity.

Though between a sword and a large scythe, a large scythe held the advantage of reach, Elena's sword whip had the characteristics of both a sword and a whip. In terms of range, Elena probably held the advantage.

(And it's also convenient in close combat as it can be returned to the form of a long sword, should I call it unfair?.....

The sword whip had close range and long range usage. Rei judged that his Death Scythe's would have the advantage at medium range.

Elena thought of the same thing and wielded her sword whip at the same time Rei took a step forward.

The sword blade extended in response to her movements and changed into a bladed whip as it attacked Rei.

Originally, if a skilled person used a whip, it's speed could exceed the speed of sound. As for a sword whip, though it wasn't exactly a whip, it was easy to imagine it's speed as Elena wielded it.

「Tch!」

Rei was only able to react simply because his five senses and physical abilities were much better than an ordinary human's. He wielded the Death Scythe with almost reflexive movements as he parried the tip of the sword whip and aimed at her body.

「As expected. To block my attack so easily.....」

Though Elena muttered that in admiration, Rei had a bitter smile on his lips.

「Same to you Elena-sama. It's been a while since I've received such an attack.However, I'm not satisfied with leaving it just at that, next is this!」

Kicking against the ground, he closed the distance to Elena while holding the Death Scythe. In response, Elena wielded the sword whip at such a speed as to not let Rei catch his breath. However, Rei blocked everything perfectly using both the blade and handle of the Death Scythe.

「What's the matter, can you only block and not evade?」

Wielding the sword whip, the tip of the sword slide above the ground towards Rei's feet, as if crawling.

To that attack, Rei blocked it with the handle of the Death Scythe.

However, with a twist of Elena's wrist, the sword whip changed it's trajectory and went up, the tip going towards Rei's body. Parrying it again with the blade of the Death Scythe, Rei smiled.

「Even if I evaded it, it can change it's trajectory like just now. At the very least, avoiding it barely is not the best thing to do.....-!」

He parried the attacking sword whip with the Death Scythe as he had done before. However, the strength with which he wielded the Death Scythe was much greater than before. The sword whip was parried with enough force as to

provide an opportunity when Elena tried to change it's trajectory.

And Rei did not miss this chance.

Quickly kicking against the ground, he entered his own range. Elena, whose range had been broken, held her desire to express her admiration as she used magic to contract her sword whip back into a normal sword to wait for Rei.

「Haah!」

Elena parried the Death Scythe with her blade. As Elena knew the weight behind Rei's attack, it wasn't an option for her to take the blow. Because her arm had become numb after parrying an attack yesterday, in the worst case scenario, she would drop her sword whip on the ground if she took that attack head on.

(Rei's attacks are certainly heavy. However, that's why there should be a chance after attacks with all his strength.)

The Death Scythe's attack was parried with the blade. Though Elena was aiming for the chance after the attack was warded off.....

「-!?!」

The blade was thrown off as she tried to parry. Death Scythe continued moving without stopping.

The unique ability of the Death Scythe was to allow the user to not feel its weight. Rei was able to manipulate the Death Scythe, that easily exceeded 100kg, as if he was wielding a tree branch.

「What!?!」

Still, Elena, who was feared as the General Princess by the surrounding nations, was able to react to that attack. On reflex, she extended the sword blade with all the magic power she could use.....

「A draw, is it.」

「It seems to be so.」

The blade of the Death Scythe was touching the right of Elena's neck. As for Rei, the the tip of the sword whip had extended out and was pointing at the side of his head at the same time.

「.....Such a thing, drawing with Elena-sama? It's the first time I've seen that.」

Ara couldn't believe it and had a look of surprise on her face.

「.....」

Kuust learned of Rei's ability again and ground his teeth.

「What to say. Though I thought you were skilled, for it to be to this extent. As I thought, it's a bit unexpected. Should I say, a nice miscalculation.」

While Vel spoke up in his usual mild voice, he looked at Rei with a sharp look.

Chapter 70

「.....It's peaceful.」

Ara murmured as the carriage traveled on the road towards the dungeon.

「That certainly is so. However, well, there's no need for pointless fights.」

Elena, who was reading a book on tactics, lifted her eyes up at Ara's words.

The carriage had already left the highway and was advancing along a road that wasn't a road.

No, to be accurate, it was a compacted dirt road formed due to people like them traveling to the dungeon.

Although they were all advancing along like this, Ara's words indicated that this smooth travel was boring.

Though normally, it would take about two nights to travel from Gimuru to the dungeon, the magic item carriage demonstrated effect on the warhorse, strengthening it and allowing it to pull the carriage much faster. In the first place, the warhorse pulling the carriage was an excellent horse, even for the Mireana Kingdom. It was impossible to not make good progress.

In addition, if any monsters that found the carriage wanted to attack, thinking they were prey, most understood the difference in strength upon seeing Set walk along side the carriage and hid themselves. There were monsters that weren't able to see the difference in strength and still attacked, like the Iron Snake from the day before. However, that was because their intelligence was low. They were literally stomped by Set, killed and stored into the Misty Ring by Rei as food for Set.

As a result of the smooth journey, at their phenomenal pace, they would likely travel from Gimuru to the dungeon in a single night.

「But you know Elena-sama. If there isn't anything, I can't maintain the feeling of tension. At least, we could attack some thieves to kill time.」

「Ara, that's a bit too aggressive.」

Kuust muttered amazed as he read a book on dungeons while on the sofa.

「What. Even Kuust has become used to the leisure.」

「Hmph, don't drag into trouble with you Ara. Because I learned about the dungeon like this it's not for leisure.」

Maybe those words raised a flag. The sound of a whistle, that had been heard several times before, resounded through the carriage.

「Because you said something strange.....」

「Don't blame me. And anyway, the Griffon will tidy it up again.」

But contrary to Ara's words, the whistle that had always been stopped after a brief moment by Set during the journey, continued to sound without stopping.

As expected, Kuust become a bit uneasy and stood up from the sofa to open the door to the driver's seat to ask Vel what was going on.

Going that, Vel's usual light expression was gone. He had an unusual severe look on his face.

「What monster is it?」

「.....It might be a little awkward.」

Vel gave a brief answer to Kuust's question. With that alone, all the people inside the carriage understood that the situation wasn't simple.

Kuust grabbed his magic spear and Ara, her sword. Elena also raised her hand to her sword whip.

Rei, who had been dispatched as a guard, also stood up, ready to take out the Death Scythe from the Misty Ring at any time.

Speaking of why he hadn't taken out the Death Scythe inside, it was simply an issue with the door of the carriage. Though the door was big in its own way, he would be held up taking out the Death Scythe, which was over 2m long.

「Vel, is there a problem with advancing in the carriage?」

「It's a little difficult at the moment.」

「What's the reason? Is it the enemy's speed?」

Vel shook his head in silence at Elena's question. While speaking, he turned to look ahead frequently to control the warhorse.

「No, in the first place, I can't even see the enemy. Yet, the hostility perception of the carriage won't stop.」

「Can you confirm if you can't see it or they are aiming at this carriage from a distance?」

「If it is an Undead or a Ghost, it will be troublesome.」

Giving a small nod at Ara's words, decided what to do.

「We can't go all the way to the dungeon taking along this enemy and more that anything else, it isn't our nature to run away.Kuust, stop the carriage. We will stop it here.」

「Is that fine? I feel like it would be better to escape.」

「Too tedious.」

「Yes, yes. Seriously, our Miss is quite brave to make such a reckless rush.....no, I didn't say anything.」

When Ara silently pointed the tip of her sword at Vel's face, he stopped the carriage in cold sweat.

「Rei, because we haven't been able to cooperate together yet, move on your own without minding us.」

「I appreciate that. Then I will be with Set as usual.」

Giving a small nod at Rei's words, Elena turned to Ara. Ara understood her at a glance and slammed open the door the moment the carriage stopped. Kuust readied his magic spear at the back as Rei dashed out and immediately took the Death Scythe out of the Misty Ring.

「Elena-sama, I can't find the enemy.」

「Same here.」

「I know right? And yet the hostility perception keeps whistling without stopping.」

Vel told everyone while holding a bow from the top of the driver's seat and looking around sharply.

「.....I certainly can't see the enemy. However, if the hostility perception is reacting, there is definitely something watching with malicious thoughts. Watch out and don't drop your guard.」

While listening to Elena's words, Rei held the Death Scythe and watched the surroundings as he headed to Set, who was near the carriage.

In the surrounding area, or rather, all around the area of the carriage where Rei had stopped, was grassy plains. A bit further away was a forest where reasonably trees grew densely.

(Though I'm suspicious of the forest.)

「Set, do you feel anything?」

「Gururu~」

Set also shook his head at Rei's question, even with a Griffon's five sense, he was unable to sense the presence of the enemy.

「As it is, what if we are attacked. In that case, insurance is necessary. Magic Shield」

He used Magic Shield, which was one of the skills the Death Scythe obtained after absorbing a magic stone. Then, the next moment, Rei moved the shield of light that was formed to a position that wouldn't interfere with the movements of the Death Scythe.

Seeing the shield of light suddenly appearing, Elena glanced at it before immediately looking around for traces of the enemy.

However, several minutes passed without an attack from the enemy, not even its figure could be seen.

「Rei, were you able to find the enemy?」

Though Elena called out from the other side of the carriage, the enemy couldn't be found, even with Rei and Set's senses.

「There's no sign of the enemy here.....」

「Rei?」

To the words which suddenly broke off, Elena asked again.

However, Rei turned a sharp eye to the surroundings without answering the question.

「Guru~」

Set probably felt something similar. He looked around while giving a growl of warning.

From the surrounding plains and forest, a peculiar wind blew, like the change from summer to autumn.

Under such circumstances, a faint sound was heard.

「Rei, what is it? Did you find something?」

「-!?」

The moment he heard Elena's voice, Rei instinctively swung down the Death Scythe.

A metallic sound echoed.

At that moment, Rei definitely saw it. The thing that had attacked. In other words.

「Elena-sama, please watch out. It's a huge mantis. Around the same size as the carriage. It went invisible to target us!」

Rei yelled out. Yes, Rei had seen a huge mantis the size of the carriage. The mantis had appeared for only a moment to unleash its attack. Right after it was blocked by the blow of the Death Scythe, it disappeared again.

(Is it something like optical camouflage? But I couldn't even hear it. And in that case, Set should also be able to smell it.)

Thinking about that question in his mind, he immediately dispelled it when remembered the knowledge from when he lived in the countryside.

A mantis basically killed its prey in ambushes. In other words, him not hearing anything was because the mantis had hidden here in ambush. And by chance, Rei had entered the mantis' attack range and blocked its attack.

Though the reason for not smelling it was still unknown, he judged that he would think about that after repelling it.

「Kyaa~!」

He suddenly heard a scream while looking for the mantis. When Rei looked at that direction, he saw the figure of Ara catching the mantis' scythe with her

sword while the right shoulder of her armour had been destroyed.

For the first time, Rei clearly saw the appearance of the mantis.

It was about 4m long. It's body was covered like the exoskeleton of a beetle and had 2 pairs of scythes. In other words, it had 4 arms.

While block Ara with a single scythe, it stopped Kuust's magic spear on the other side with another scythe. Though the mantis tried to kill the two of them with its remaining two scythes, Vel's arrows, shot from further away, and Elena's sword whip obstructed it.

Confirming the situation of the battle, Rei shouted to Elena.

「Elena-sama, Set and I will attack from the sky.」

「I understand! However, since it's a mantis, there's a possibility it can fly. Take enough care.」

Hearing Elena's reply, he sat astride Set's back.

「Set, you understand.」

「Gururururu~!」

With a short cry, Set flapped his wings and took a run up of a few steps. He then kicked against the air as he went up into the sky.

As Set turned sharply, Elena and the other 3 were fighting against the mantis on equal terms.

(.....No, it's not quite even. Because the two vanguards are locked down by the mantis, Elena can't use magic with her sword whip, which is her true strength. Or can she not use her full power because of the limited trajectories?)

The situation of the battle could be confirmed from the sky. Maybe the mantis had a decent intelligence or maybe it was instinctive, it acted to use both Ara and Kuust as a shield against Elena. Vel's bow and arrows, lacking power, could only wear down its exoskeleton and had no impact on the balance of the battle.

「Seriously, if it's a mantis, it's belly should be soft. It's like it's wearing armour. Set, let's go. Follow after me. We'll attack in waves.」

「Guru~!」

Hearing Set's cry, Rei jumped off Set's back. He fell right above the mantis while swinging the Death Scythe at the same time.....

「-!?」

At that moment, Rei saw the mantis' face turn 180 degrees to look at him.

After blasting Ara into the air with a single blow, the mantis swung its large scythe, which was about the same size as the Death Scythe, against Rei, who was in the air.

「Flying Slash!」

At the mantis' actions, Rei immediately judged that it looked like the Flying Slash skill of his Death Scythe. This judgement saved Rei. He immediately released the same Flying Slash from the Death Scythe against the one the mantis had launched. They collided in mid air between Rei and the mantis and canceled each other out.

But don't forget. Against Rei's single Death Scythe, the mantis had four scythes.

「Rei, dodge!」

As Elena shouted, Kuust and Ara were blown away. It then targeted Elena.

Though Elena wanted to block the attacks against Rei, Kuust would get caught up in the attack. Judging that Kuust had a high probability of getting injured if she evaded, she made her choice to catch him.

Because Kuust, who could use healing magic, would have been blown away and injured, she wanted to avoid that by all means against a monster that they couldn't even see before.

「Shoes of Sleipnir, start!」

Rei, who was unaware of what was going on on the ground, activated the Shoes of Sleipnir that allowed him to step on the air. And quickly readying himself, he kicked against the air.

「Gururu~!」

Set gave a sharp cry, flapped his wings and caught Rei on his back before

moving away from the mantis and landing.

「Set, I'm saved.」

「Gurururu~」

Giving brief thanks to Set, he turned his eyes to the mantis again with the Death Scythe readied in his hands.

Forming a line next to him was Elena, who had caught Kuust who had been blown away.

Quickly looking around, Kuust was trying to sneak around to the back of the mantis with his magic spear. Vel was shooting arrows to restrain it. Ara had been knocked away earlier and had lost consciousness after smacking into the carriage.

「Rei, it will become troublesome if this takes any longer. We have to kill it in one go.」

「I understand. It will be troublesome if the mantis escapes by flying away.」

「Ahh. Then in the mean time, can you distract it? I want to kill it in one go with magic.」

「There's no problem. Then.....I'm going!」

「Don't miss the signal.」

While hearing Elena's voice from behind, he closed the range while holding the Death Scythe.

「.....」

The mantis waited silently for Rei, raised its four large scythes.....and swung them down!

It threw out four Flying Slashes, identical to the ones from before. Further more, though Rei realised that each one was sent out at a slightly different time, he disregarded it and kept going.

(Compared to before, there are plenty of countermeasures if I know about it!)

The first slash was avoided by tilting his body. The second one was cut apart by the Death Scythe's magic power. The third one was simultaneously blocked by the handle of the Death Scythe. The last was blocked by the Magic Shield

which hadn't been used in the aerial fight before. Like that, the Magic Shield disappeared into mist in the corner in front of him. After that, the figure of the mantis awaited in before Rei.

「HAAAaaa-!」

Against the scythe of the mantis that was swung down, Rei met it with the Death Scythe.

The magic empowered blade of the Death Scythe collided with the scythe of the mantis..... At the rear, the moment Kuust was waiting for arrived. Zak~, the Death Scythe cut through the scythe of the mantis without much resistance.

「.....」

Though its upper right arm was cut away, the mantis silently swung down the remaining three scythes without a cry of pain.

While avoiding the scythes, he struck out again. Its upper left arm was cut off and sent flying.

(What, this sense of incongruity.)

Certainly, there were insect type monsters that felt no pain. However, it was still normal for them to show some sort of reaction if they were shocked or suffered fatal damage. But the huge mantis in front of Rei continued its next attack without emotion even though it had just lost two of its arms, which also acted as its weapons.

The sense of incongruity only distracted him for a moment.....but that moment brought up a fatal opening.

As if the upper left arm that had been cut away was a decoy, the mantis swung down its remaining two arms.

Normally, it wasn't a difficult attack for Rei to avoid. However, the sense of incongruity caused by the mantis made him miss his timing.....

「Don't blank out in the middle of combat!」

Kuust's magic spear flew out from behind the mantis, intercepting the attack of the scythe that would have killed Rei.

Repelling the scythe, the magic spear pierced the ground next to Rei.

Rei didn't miss this chance and leaped aside. An arrow shot by Vel stopped the mantis from pursuing.

And.....

「Move-!」

Elena's voice echoed out. Hearing the voice, Rei reflexive kicked against the ground and quickly took some distance from the mantis.

Only Rei had been near the mantis. After throwing his spear, Kuust had quickly left. Vel was attacking with a bow and arrow and wasn't there in the first place. Ara had fainted next to the carriage.

Confirming that Rei had moved away, Elena invoked the magic she had finished chanting.

『Lightning Tornado!』

The moment the magic was cast, wind gathered around the mantis as if drawing a circle, forming a tornado. At first, the tornado was only large enough to stop one of the mantis' legs. However, it rapidly increased in size to surround the 4m long mantis and kept growing bigger. Matching its name, lightning began to wrap around the tornado at the same time. The mantis at the center continued to take attacks from the wind and lightning until the tornado disappeared.

Chapter 71

The tornado in front of Rei's eyes disappeared.

A tornado clad in lightning, based on its power, there were no issues with calling it an advanced wind magic.

What was more surprising was that Elena still had strength remaining despite using such a magic.

Judging from Rei's eyes, Elena was still holding the sword whip, ready for battle in the event of an unexpected situation.

(As expected of the General Princess.)

While raising a voice of admiration in his mind, Rei also readied his Death Scythe in case of an sudden event.

Further away, Vel was wary of the enemy and drew his bow to its full extent while Kuust pulled his magic spear out of the ground.

While watching the tornado disappear, Elena spoke to Rei.

「Rei, do you know what that monster is?」

「No, it's the first time I've seen this monster. However, because my adventurer knowledge isn't that great, there's a possibility I just don't know. What about Elena-sama?」

「No, it's also the first time I've seen this monster. But it's a monster with a great amount of strength. Rumors should have spread.」

「As we saw at the beginning, it has the ability to blend in with the surroundings. The ordinary adventurer wouldn't notice anything and would literally become prey in an ambush. So it might not have spread? The monster was already strong enough even when fought normally.」

「That's true. What do you think?」

「At the very least, it was like my fight against the Orc King.....I think is a good comparison.」

「An Orc King is a B rank monster. Certainly, the impression I got was that this monster was stronger than B rank but weaker than A rank.」

And as they talked like that while being cautious of any sudden events, the lightning tornado soon completely disappeared.

As for what was left, all that remained was the the corpse of the giant mantis that had been cut into pieces by the tornado and burnt by lightning at the same time.

「We did it somehow, it seems.」

Elena gave a sigh of relief. Next to her, Rei lowered his Death Scythe. Kuust and Vel also lowered their weapons.

Immediately after the battle, in the relieved atmosphere, Elena gave instructions to everyone.

「Kuust, treat Ara with healing magic. Vel, take the mantis' magic stone.....」

However, Elena wasn't able to finish her sentence.

「Elena-sama-!」

Kuust's shocked voice echoed through the surroundings.

The three people instantly turned to look at Kuust before turning to face what he was looking at.

「.....What?」

Rei involuntarily leaked a voice.

Originally, the corpse of the mantis that was killed by Elena's magic should have been lying there.

.....No, the corpse was still there. But it was only 『still』 there for now.

「What, it's melting? 」

Yes, as Rei murmured, the corpse of the huge 4m long mantis rapidly disintegrated as it produced a fine foam from various areas.

It's speed wasn't fast enough to be in an instant, but it wasn't slow enough that something could be done about it.

At the same time, a pungent odour from the melting mantis pierced their noses. The liquid flowing from the corpse of the mantis changed to a brown

colour as it flowed onto the grass growing on the ground, dissolving it.

「This.....what on earth is happening?」

Elena said in a stunned voice. However, no one here could answer that question.

Meanwhile, Kuust approached Elena after walking around the corpse of the mantis.

「Elena-sama. Though I don't know what's going on right now, I don't think the smell drifting from there is good for the body. We should immediately leave this place.」

「Umu~, that is certainly so. I wanted to examine what kind of monster it was and take a part of it if it had been possible.....」

To Elena's regret, every piece of the mantis' flesh had already disappeared before her eyes, even the liquid that had dissolved the grass was gone. All that remained was the pungent smell that assailed the nose. And even that would be scattered by the wind before long.

Just a few minutes ago, they had been fighting the monster. Elena frowned her eyebrows involuntarily as what they had fought had already completely vanished.

Discomfort. Yes, all that remained was a strong sense of discomfort in her chest.

However, the corpse of the mantis was already gone and they couldn't check it to try to find their sense of discomfort. Staying here would do nothing more than to waste time.

「Let's depart. Kuust, take Ara to the carriage.」

「Leave it to me.」

Following Elena's instructions, Kuust carried Ara, who had fainted next to the carriage.

「Vel, please check the carriage to see if there are any problems.」

「Leave that to me.」

Replying in his usual light tone, Vel examined the carriage and the driver's

seat.

「Rei, please watch the area along with Set just in case. That mantis may not have been the only one.」

「I understand.」

Rei nodded and moved a bit further away from the carriage with Set as he concentrated on the signs and sounds of the surroundings.

「Guru~」

Set similarly searched the surroundings as he stayed beside Rei.

Meanwhile, while straining his ears, Rei thought in his heart while readying his Death Scythe to fight against an enemy at any time.

(That mantis, at the very least, it can't be called a monster)

In the first place, monsters wouldn't disappear even if they committed suicide and the moment of defeat. Demons, monsters, magical beasts. Though there were various names, they were all living creatures in the broad sense of the term.

(The mantis was able to completely hide it's own existence.....wait. Just now, what did I think of? Completely hiding its existence? In other words, it wanted to hide the fact it existed?)

While thinking like that, he noticed someone approaching from behind and turned around.

Vel raised a hand as he approached.

「Because there are no problems with the carriage, we will be departing soon. Elena-sama told me to call you.」

Maybe because of the fight with the giant mantis, his usual light tone didn't come out, instead Vel said it in a somewhat tired tone.

Nodding at his words, Rei headed back to the carriage along with Set.

「I wonder, Rei. You're an adventurer right? That mantis from before, what do you think?」

On the way back to the carriage, Vel asked Rei. Rei shook his head in response

to that question.

「That was new. At least, I've never know of any monster that would dissolve into the wind as soon as it died.」

「I know right. I've experience fighting with several kinds of monsters until now but it's the first time I've seen one dissolve after being defeated.」

「.....It's unknown whether that was even a monster.」

「Eh?」

Because those words were only muttered out of his mouth in a whisper, Vel didn't seem to catch it and asked again. However, Rei pretended not to hear the question and turned to face the carriage.

「You came. Then we will leave immediately. Even if you say there is no evidence, it's still an abnormal situation no matter how you look at it. If I'm not mistaken, there should be a guild branch office near the dungeon?」

「Yes. It is possible to purchase information there.」

Waking up after fainting previously, Ara answered Elena's question awkwardly.

「Ah, Rei-dono.I'm sorry I dragged you down.」

As soon as she saw Rei, she quickly bowed her head.

Noticing that she seemed to be ashamed for fainting after being hit by the mantis, Rei gave a wry smile.

「Don't worry about it. The mantis had the ability of a B rank monster at the very least. It can't be helped if you made a mistake due to having no prior knowledge.」

「But.....」

That was put nicely. Rei gave a wry smile. To put it badly, Ara had made a reckless rush only to get herself knocked out

In fact, as the giant mantis could turn invisible and attack with flying slashes with all four scythes, it was a extraordinary thing even to Rei. It wasn't possible to laugh at Ara and blame her.

「Isn't it precisely because Ara let us see its strength by risking her body that

no more damage was done?」

「Elena-sama.....」

Cheer up.....to the words that said the facts, Ara turned to Elena.

「Indeed, where is your usual spirit. You are the mood setter for this group, won't the atmosphere get gloomy if you get gloomy? If you think you made a mistake this time, then you should fix your mistake next time. Am I wrong? At the very least, the usual Ara would look forward and think positively. I feel that such an Ara is much more preferable.」

「Yes, I understand! I will show my usefulness to Elena-sama next time!」

Listening to the encouragement from Elena, whom she idolised, Ara immediately recovered, as if on reflex. While smiling wryly, Elena spoke again.

「Ara, could you brew some tea? For everyone.」

「Yes, at once.」

Nodding at Elena's words, Ara headed for the kitchen magic item.

Elena watched her go with a soft smile.

「You have a good relationship.」

「Hm? Ahh, it certainly seems to be so. Anyhow, for someone holding the position of a duke's daughter, I'm considered an oddball for putting myself in battle. I have few female friends. There are many nobles who try to gain my favour, Ara was the only one of them who genuinely admired me. Because of that, Ara is an irreplaceable existence to me.Tell me, why would I keep Ara by my side just because of that? You actually know her own strength, don't you?」

At Elena's words, he thought back to the time they first met in the city of Gimuru.

Neither the speed and skill of the attack were notable. However, there was strength behind it. It was a killing attack based on physical strength only.

「Certainly, her strength is a considerable advantage when fighting in close combat.」

「Umu~. But although Ara has obtained my trust as a knight, she needs to become stronger. When that happens, I will have no complaints with her

recklessly rushing forward.」

As Rei and Elena talked about that, before long, 2 cups of tea were brought to them.

「Thank you for waiting, here's the tea.」

「Thank you.Now then, everyone listen for a moment. About the matter of the mantis.What do you think?」

At Elena's words, the other three people in the carriage, Rei, Ara and Kuust, gave serious expressions.

Surprisingly, the first person to speak was Kuust. After moistening his mouth with tea, he turned to look at his magic spear.

「At the very least, it's not something I could have fought by myself. No, in fact, thinking back on the fight, I think that I was dragging Elena-sama down.」

「It was the same for me. If I hadn't been knocked out, I would probably have dragged you down.」

At Kuust's words, Ara replied with a bitter smile.

Considering her depressed mood earlier, her quick recovery was probably due to the fact that she was Ara.

「Combat strength aside, the most troublesome thing was its ability to become invisible. In addition, because it remained completely motionless while waiting for someone to get close, Set and I noticed its existence late. Somehow, Set was even unable to detect it by smell, it would be difficult to deal with if the other party received an attack from its scythes while it was invisible.」

「That's right, its ability to turn invisible is extremely troublesome as Rei-dono said. In fact, I was caught off guard by its attack. It was mostly due to luck that I was able to block that attack.」

Comparing to her reply to Kuust, Ara agreed with Rei with a somewhat firm tone.

「It wasn't easy to attack as its body was covered in something like a shell, it could also attack by sending out a wind slash, similar to the wind magic that Rei used.」

Kuust murmured while moistening his mouth with tea again.

Though he tried to disregard Rei's existence as much as possible, it was a different story if it was work.

「And above all was the abnormality after it was defeated. After being defeated, it melted its own body and destroyed itself. It isn't an ordinary monster.Rei, weren't you an apprentice to a magician? Do you have any ideas?」

Hearing Elena's words, Rei immediately recalled his backstory.

However, in the end, a setting was only a setting and not reality.

「Please wait a moment. I'll try to see if I can recall anything.」

After saying that to Elena, he drew out Zepairu's knowledge for the first time in a long while.

After a few seconds, he found the only likely thing in Zepairu's knowledge.

「Though I'm not certain.....how to say it, this method might be able to explain the phenomenon in the case of this mantis.....there is one possibility.」

At Rei's words, everyone including Elena had looks of surprise.

And Elena asked the question which everyone had in their mind.

「What is it?」

「If the mantis was an existence like a sort of artificial life form made by alchemy. In that case, in the process of making the mantis, it is possible to incorporate a device that would destroy any evidence if it were to die to prevent any of the alchemist's technology being taken from the corpse.」

「.....Though I don't know much about alchemy, is such a thing possible?」

「There is a possibility, that's all I can say. In the first place, I hardly learned about alchemy from my master. With my current knowledge, I only remembered that I seemed to have heard that from a conversation.」

「Well, any clue is better than none. Once we get to the dungeon, we'll inform the guild branch office about the mantis.」

After that, more about the mantis was discussed. But because there was no evidence as the corpse had disappeared, any opinions beyond Rei's idea were

vague.

And that evening, the carriage reached the village established at the outskirts of the dungeon.

Chapter 72

It was a few hours after waging a desperate struggle with the mantis. It was late summer, or rather, early autumn. However, the carriage was still able to arrive at the dungeon in the evening, before the sun had fully set.

「.....Uwa~. This, it isn't on the scale of a village.」

Ara was looking out the carriage and murmured that half in shock and half in admiration.

When Rei, Elena and Kuust heard that, they also looked out the window.

Though they had heard that there was a village in the vicinity of the dungeon from the preliminary information they had collected, as far as they could see from the carriage, it was already at the size of a town rather than a village. However, as expected, it was a fairly small town compared to the city of Gimuru.

At the front of the gate that was the entrance to the village, a number of merchants were lined up, probably aiming for the items from the dungeon.

At first, when the carriage was seen, the merchants which were lined up in front of the main gate tried to run away as the soldier raised their weapons. It was no wonder, after all, the Griffon that was next to the carriage was something rarely seen at the frontier.

However, the safety of Set was guaranteed by Margrave Rowlocks, who ruled this land, Duke Kerebel, a big shot in in the Noble faction, and Vel, who served as the driver of the carriage. At the same time, because Set didn't make much of a fuss, they were able to enter the village safely.

Currently, Set was quietly walking next to the carriage while wearing a Necklace of Subservient Monster, similar to the one he wore in Gimuru.

Although the inhabitants of the village were initially surprised to see the Griffon, they gave a sigh of relief after seeing the Necklace of Subservient Monster.

Unlike the city of Gimuru, most people in the village were adventurers or people who came here expressly to trade with adventurers. Because of that, they had more guts than ordinary people. When they saw that Set wouldn't harm them, they accepted him as part of the defense force of the village instead. Adding to that, among the adventurers that entered the dungeon, there were people who took summoned or tamed monster with them, which may have influenced quite a few people.

Naturally, there were people that disliked the Griffon and averted their eyes. However, they tolerated him because he could be used as fighting force.

「It's very difficult to build a city on the frontier, they were finally able to build the city of Gimuru after fielding a large number of soldiers.....although I read that in a book that was in the library.....should I say, as expected of the dungeon.」

Rei muttered, impressed.

It was easy to explain the structure of the dungeon. There was an entrance leading to the dungeon at the center of the village. A defensive wall was built around the entrance to stop monsters from going to the surroundings. And with that as the center, buildings were simply spread out around it. Finally, the whole village was surrounded by a large, sturdy, wooden fence to protect the buildings.

Concerning the mystery of the spectacle before him, there was no need to be more surprised than necessary as it had all been recorded in the book about the dungeon that he had read for a while.

Since the nucleus in the deepest part of the dungeon forcibly transfers monsters in the surrounding area into the dungeon to protect itself, it naturally reduced the number of monsters in the surroundings of the dungeon. This had an impact on the guilds and adventurers. It made the village around the dungeon accessible to merchants. Of course, as not all monsters around the dungeon were transferred into it, in rare cases, monsters would attack the village. In order to fight the monsters, adventurers were hired to defend the village.

It should be noted that even if there were no monster attacks, it was still

possible to earn a reward for defending the village. It was a pretty useful way for adventurers to earn a little pocket money.

However, in the end, because the monsters were only transferred into the dungeon because of the dungeon nucleus, if the nucleus were to be destroyed, the monsters in the surrounding area would no longer be transferred and the region would become an extremely dangerous area. Moreover, although rare, because monsters would sometimes come out of the dungeon itself, it wasn't a village or town where people could live in peace like the city of Gimuru.

Because the village/town near the dungeon was basically built for merchants, mercenaries and adventurers who wanted to challenge the dungeon, it was in the end only a temporary construct.

Basically, in some places in the country, the lord of the territory would plan out and dispatch knights and soldiers to a dungeon to prepare to build a labyrinth city around it. However, there were a lot of monsters at the frontier where Rei was. In comparison, there weren't many monsters along the highways closer to the center of the country. Several labyrinth cities had also been built in several places in the Mireana Kingdom.

「Now then. Now we're safely in, what to do now.」

Entering the village with the identification of the guild card and mixing with the merchants, Elena muttered as the carriage moved along the beaten road.

Rei glanced over and thought a bit before speaking.

「There are roughly two options. Inform the guild about the mantis or decide on an inn before going to the guild.As for me, I recommend the latter.」

「Hou~, why is that?」

「As you can see, in this village, there are a large amount of adventurers and merchants. So unless we go to an inn as quickly as possible, there may be a problem of whether we can secure a place to stay.」

「But Rei-dono, in the first place, I think it would be impossible to find an inn in this village that Elena-sama could rest in.」

Ara objected to Rei's proposal.

As for Ara, she may not have been able to accept having to let Elena stay at a

cheap inn which other adventurers used.

However, Elena shook her head at Ara's words.

「Ara, don't ask for the impossible. In the first place, I'm someone who has gone to the battlefield. It's not a big problem as long as it isn't a terrible place.」
「Although it can't be helped in the battlefield, you should stay somewhere corresponding to the position of someone carrying the blood of Duke Kerebel.」

Kuust also said that to Elena.

「.....I understand what both of you are saying, in the first place though, aren't majority of the inns for adventurers who are challenging the dungeon? Is there an inn like what you said?」

「Tentatively, I have checked the area previously. Though most inns in the village were aimed at adventurers in general, in fact, it isn't unusual for nobles to come to the dungeon for reasons like Elena-sama. Well, it's not particularly frequent though.」

「Is that so?」

「.....Ara, don't interrupt me. Well, to answer Ara's question, I can't say for sure. It isn't an unusual story for nobles confident in their abilities to challenge the dungeon. And because of that, there many nobles who can't stand having to stay in the same inn with commoners. Because of that, an inn for nobles usually exists near a dungeon. However, because nobles who want to challenge the dungeon are in the end a minority, their main customers seem to be large commercial groups.」

It was Kuust who answered Ara's question, however, Elena spoke with slightly furrowed eyebrows.

「Kuust. It is good to have pride as noble, but even so, we should not feel impressed at holding commoners in derision. We as nobles can only live from taxes by the commoners.」

「.....Yes. Sorry. I spoke too much.」

While apologising to Elena, Kuust gave a sharp look at Rei.

As for Kuust, he had seemed to make such a remark about commoners only because Elena was showing interest in Rei.

Warding off Kuust's gaze with a wry smile in his mind, Rei turned to Elena.

「Elena-sama, what should we do?」

「Well, that's right. I don't mind if it's an inn nearby.....」

She only worried over it for a few seconds before coming to a conclusion.

「As there is a possibility that various problems might occur, we will stay at an inn for nobles as Kuust said. Kuust, tell Vel.」

「I understand.」

Kuust nodded at Elena's words and opened the door to the drivers area to tell Vel their destination.

While watching the situation from the side, Ara gave a satisfied nod.

「.....Do you hate ordinary inns?」

When Rei asked Ara doubtfully, she looked back with an amazed face.

「Rei-dono, I'll say this for now but this is the decision of Elena-sama on our behalf, isn't it for the sake of Rei-dono?」

「Because of me?」

「Yes. In ordinary inns, there would naturally be bad adventurers. In the case of such people, for example, there might be some people who realise the value of the carriage and war horse and try to steal them. However, such people would surely fix their eyes on Set before the carriage. Any how, it's an A rank monster. How much money could they make if they captured him and sold him on the black market. Or, there's a possibility they would kill him and take his magic stone and strip materials off him if he acted violently.」

「.....I see.」

Rei nodded to Ara. In the city of Gimuru, which had been his base until now, because of his understanding with the staff of the Dusk Wheat with respect to tamed and summoned monsters, Rei hadn't had to worry about those things.

(Well, I think if any adventurers made an attempt to attack Set, they would only be killed.)

After all, in addition to a Griffon's normal abilities, he had obtained a number of skills by absorbing magic stones, could block projectiles, was equipped with a

magic item to increase physical strength and one with the effect of constant recovery. There was no doubt that Set could literally dispatch several adventurers up to rank C and B.

While thinking like that, the carriage advanced. Before long, a luxurious inn became visible from the carriage.

It was certainly luxurious compared to the inns for adventurers, which were occasionally built inside alleyways. However, Kuust and Ara didn't seem to be satisfactorily convinced by this and made dissatisfied faces as they looked at the inn.

「When viewed from a distance, it seemed to be a decent accommodation, but.....」

「That's right.But, well, it can't be helped. It's a fact that this is the best inn in the village.」

The carriage stopped as Ara and Kuust grumbled with each other, Vel showed up from the door to the drivers area.

「For the moment, we've arrived at the inn. Next are the procedures. Well, I'm sorry, but can Rei ask about if Set can be cared for himself? I think there will be a variety of instructions even if he is put into the stables.」

「Ahh, I understand.By the way, is it better if I pay for my own accommodation? 」

Though Rei asked because he financially had enough to spare for now, Elena shook her head with a wry smile.

「Rei was dispatched for this request. Because of that, you don't need to worry about accommodation and food expenses during the trip.」

「Thank you.」

Bowing his head slightly at Elena, Rei got off the carriage in order to ask about the stables.

「W-W-W-Welcome-!」

Possibly an employee of the inn, a boy in his mid teens nervously called out with his small head bowed as Rei came out of the carriage.

After glancing to make sure Set was still here, Rei spoke out with a wry smile in his head.

「We want to stay at this inn, I would also like to use the stables.」
「Y-Yes. I'll guide you there immediately.」

The boy proceed to go to the back of the inn with awkward movements, such as with his hands and feet in sync.

Rei judged that it would be bad in various ways if he left it like that and lightly tapped the shoulder of the boy who was walking ahead.

「Hii~!」
「Calm down. Though I understand why you're tense, as you can see, Set.....ah, no. You don't have to worry as this Griffon won't go around actively hurting people.
「Gururu~」

While speaking with the boy, Rei stroked Set's head.

Maybe it was comfortable, Set gave a cry in a good mood.

And looking at the situation, the boy's tension seemed to be released. However, he was still cautious as he looked at Set with some interest.

「C-Certainly it's quite quiet.How to say, it gives off the feeling of a pet cat.」
「That's true, I get the same feeling when I touch him.」
「Gurururu~」

Patting him some more, Set rubbed his head against Rei.

While watching the situation, he turned to glance at the boy. He appeared to be suppressing his urge to reach out with his hands.

「Would you like to pat him?」
「I-Is that okay? That is, he won't bite.....」
「It's safe as long as you don't do something strange to him.」
「Then.....」

Gulp, the boy timidly reached out with his hand. His hand gradually approached Set.....and withdrew at once after patting him for a moment.

As expected, it was difficult for him to sudden stroke Set's head.

And seeing that Set didn't react in particular, he reached out again.....and patted Set's back several times.

「Guru~」

He quickly withdrew his hands after hearing Set's cry.

「CCustomer-san. Just now.....」

「Don't worry. That wasn't an unhappy cry, he gave a cry because he felt good having his back stroked.」

The story was quick from there. After a few minutes, the boy who was scared of Set when he saw him for the first time was happily stroking Set's head.

As he talked while stroking Set, the went to the stables.

「Ah, I should have told you my name earlier. I'm Linde, I mainly do the chores at this inn.」

「I'm Rei. As you can see, I'm an adventurer.」

「Is Rei-san here for the dungeon after all?」

「Ahh, as Linde-san saw, I was riding in that great carriage. You could say I'm an escort or maybe a guard. Well, something like that.」

「Heeh~.....even though your age isn't much different from mine, it's great that you've entrusted with such an important task. Oh, we've arrived. This is the stables.」

Guided there by Linde, the stables were double the size of the one he knew well at the Dusk Wheat.

「.....It's huge.」

To Rei, who muttered in admiration, Linde nodded somewhat proudly.

「It's because there are people and adventurers who bring tamed and summoned monsters like Rei-san's. There are also big groups that come with a lot of horses and carriages to purchase things.」

While explaining it, he opened the door to the stables and entered with Set.

Though there were several horses inside, most of them froze and didn't move the moment they saw Set. However, there was also a horse that glance at Set

before going back to eating its meal. It was probably a war horse.

「The fee will be charged along with the accommodation expenses. Or would you prefer it be charged to the noble?」

「Ahh, no problem. It would also be great if meals could be prepared for Set.」

「I understand. Is there any food which isn't good?」

「No, however, he likes to eat meat.」

「Then it will be that.」

Vel came to pick him up as he was talking to Linde and took Rei to his room.

Fortunately, it was a private room and he avoided sharing the same room with Kuust.

After settling their rooms, they went to the guild branch office to quickly report the matter about the mantis.

Chapter 73

Reserving a room at the inn, Rei gave a sigh of relief as they decided to immediately head to the guild branch office.

It was already evening and they had no other urgent business that couldn't wait until tomorrow. But in the end, there was the matter of the mantis they had fought on the way. Given it's special characteristics, Elena judged that they couldn't leisurely wait until the next day.

According to the information Vel had heard in the inn, the person in charge of the village that surrounded the dungeon and the person in charge of the guild branch office were the people who decided things here.

「Hey, look over there.....」

「Who is that beautiful girl? I don't recall seeing her here.」

「She's not just a pretty girl. Her abilities are quite good.」

「As for the guys with that girl, they also have a considerable strength.」

「Anyway, with that body, I would love to play with her for a night.」

In the first place, because Elena boasted a beautiful face and a well proportioned body, she stood out clearly as she walked through the village.

As it was a village built around a dungeon, although they may not know each others names, most of the adventurers recognised everyone else by their face. What would happen if a beautiful girl like Elena, whom they had never seen before, walked past them? The answer was now in front of Rei's eyes.

All the male adventurers that looked at Elena stopped on the spot and looked admiringly at her beauty and talked about her with their friends nearby.

.....However, the people that were muttering that they would like to play with her for a night shut up and held their breaths when Ara and Kuust gave bloodthirsty glares at them.

Unlike Kuust and Ara, who were getting angry, Elena continued walking without minding the surroundings. To Elena, who had wandered the battlefield, she just ignored it as there was nothing that could be done with her

appearance.

Naturally, there was also her confidence in her own strength. Anyhow, she had declared that anyone who wanted to make advances on her had to be at least stronger than herself. And if anyone were crazy enough and attacked her, she would just fight back, which had actually happened before.

Though their group stood out a lot, Elena led everyone through the village.

.....Though they would have attracted more attention if Set was here as well, fortunately, he wasn't here and was happily focusing on eating the food provided by Linde. Though he had wanted to go with them, Rei persuaded him.

「Um.....yes, the guild is here.」

Vel, who had been guiding them to the guild, walked out in front and looked up at the building.

Though it wasn't at the same size as the guild in the city of Gimuru, with was still a rather large building. However, as it was only a temporary building built for the dungeon, Rei was able to see that it was sloppily built in a variety of ways.

「Umu~. Then let's enter.」

Kuust frowned his eyebrows at the rough design of the guild as Elena opened the door to the guild.

As they entered, they looked around the inside of the guild.

「Hmm, something like this.」

As Elena checked the state inside the guild, the guild staff and hardened adventurers all unintentionally glanced at Elena.

As for Rei, he also looked around the guild as he stood next to Elena.

Again, maybe related to its temporary nature next to the dungeon, it was very different from the guild in Gimuru. The biggest difference was that the guild didn't have a bar. Material purchasing and party application, because a large number of adventurers would gather at the guild, the bar in Gimuru was something that was added for their use.

For example, a large amount of requests were always posted on the request boards in the guild at Gimuru. Also different were the periods of congestion in the morning and evening when people went to start and finish requests. Even then, they still had room to spare. However, because all the adventurers who were aiming for the dungeon gathered here, the guild here was awfully crowded.

At night, the monster in the dungeon became more belligerent and active, no different from when they were outside. Because of that, most adventurers would enter the dungeon at roughly the same time, causing this packed crowd.

Of course, there were also adventurers who wanted materials specifically from monsters that come out at night or those who just wanted to fight strong monsters. However, high ranking adventurers like them were few.

However, there were people who had taken guild requests to escort trade groups and as a result weren't at the guild at any specific time.

「The counter.....is over there.」

As the adventurers and guild staff who had glanced over finally gathered themselves, Elena headed towards the guild counter.

「Is here okay?」

「Ah, y-yes. Of course. What can we do for you?」

「I have a little business with the person in charge of the guild here, I would like you to tell them.」

「That, may I ask about what for? I can't permit just anyone to talk with him.」

As expected for someone working for the guild near the dungeon. Although the young male staff member was stunned by Elena's presence, it didn't take him long to calm down as he spoke and gave a reply as usual.

Impressed in her mind at his professionalism, Elena continued to speak.

「That's right, we have two business matters. First of all is this.」

Saying that, she presented two letters in two envelopes. They had the wax seals of Margrave Rowlocks and Duke Kerebel respectively.

Duke Kerebel aside, the guild staff recognised Margrave Rowlocks' crest as he

ruled the land they lived on. Taking in a sharp breath, he looked at Elena twice and checked the letter three times.

「I understand. Please wait a minute, I will tell the head of the branch immediately.」

「Umu~, I understand.」

As Elena nodded, a guild staff member nervously ran up the stairs next to the counter at a quick pace.

Watching him go, Elena looked around the inside of the guild with interest.

Because of her missions were given to her by her father, Duke Kerebel, there weren't that many opportunities to enter the guild. Not to mention under normal circumstances, Kuust and Ara would avoid bring her to such places, given her status as a duke's daughter.

There was also the opportunity to sell off the magic stones and materials they had gotten during the journey and for Vel to gather information efficiently.

「Hey, who are they? Does anyone know?」

「No. It's the first time I've seen them. They stand out so much so I wouldn't forget them if I'd seen them before, they probably came here recently.」

「Looking at their demeanor, they are probably not adventurers. They resemble some knights I know.」

「.....Knights? But what would knights come to the frontier for, moreover, so such a dangerous place like the dungeon.」

「Even if you ask me about that. You should ask the person in question if you're interested.」

There were adventurers talking with their acquaintances and companions like that. Along with that, there were also excellent mages who were behaving strangely after seeing Rei's vast magical power.

「-!?!」

「Hey, what's wrong?」

「.....」

「What, you as well? Our mage also went quiet as soon as those guys walked in.....」

While the noise went round, the guild staff member from before came down the stair and went to Elena and the others.

「Sorry for taking so long. Our representative would like to meet you.」
「Sorry for the trouble.」

Elena nodded and followed the staff who guided her up the stairs.

Of course, Kuust, Vel, Ara and Rei followed after them.

All that was left on the first floor of the guild were adventurers guessing Elena's identity and the mages who finally gathered themselves after Rei left.

Using this opportunity, the mages told the existence that was Rei to the rest of their party. That spread out from friendly party to friendly party and so on.

「Representative, I've brought Elena-sama's group.」

The guild staff probably already knew what kind of person Elena was. After respectfully guiding them to the room of the guild representative, he knocked on the door and called out.

The reply to the staff member was an unexpectedly young voice.

「Yes, please enter.」

Following the voice from inside, he opened the door and entered. Elena and the rest followed after him.

「Welcome. My name is Walker and I serve as the representative of the guild.」

Saying that, a man in his twenties stood up from behind his work desk and gave a bow. Even the highest estimate of his age wouldn't be above early thirties. He had gentle features and gave off the atmosphere of having a good attitude.

It was quite different from the person they had imagined. Vel and Ara smiled in surprise. Kuust just saw all commoners as the same and turned to look at the representative without any particular change in his expression.

Meanwhile, Rei also lifted his eyebrows slightly in surprise.

This was a guild that was right next to a dungeon. Of course, there were a great number of adventurers and quite a few rough people as well. For a guild

representative to deal with such things, they had assumed he would be someone like Daska, Margrave Rowlocks.

(This is the representative of the guild. Well, because it's probably not possible to deal with adventurers just by being gentle, I feel that he probably has another face.....)

While Rei thought that in his mind, Elena sat down on the sofa for visitors and spoke up without any particular change in expression.

In addition, the rest of them stood behind Elena as guards.

「Though I think you would have understood if you read the letter, allow me to greet you again. I am Elena Kerebel. I was dispatched by my father, Duke Kerebel, to go to the place known as the Altar of Inheritance found in this dungeon. My best regards.」

「Yes, thank you.Though that said, the Altar of Inheritance that you're talking about is on the 7th floor down, the lowest layer of the dungeon. It's very close to the location of the boss. Even from the rumors I've heard about the General Princess, it would be difficult to get there.....」

「I understand the circumstances. Fortunately, I have a subordinate called Vel who had the skills of a thief, as for the others, there is no problem with their strength.Of course, this is the first time I have gone to a dungeon, we will proceed carefully and won't let our guard down.」

Elena, Vel, Kuust and Ara. Walker then turned to look at Rei after looking at them.

「.....I understand. Though the letter asked me to assist you as much as possible, is there anything you wish for?」

「Not for the time being. We have prepared sufficient goods and combat strength in Gimuru. There are no particular issues as long as we can smoothly enter the dungeon.」

「Smoothly, is it.I see.」

Walker thought of something like nodding. Before long, he took out something similar to a guild card from the desk in the office.

「Please have this. I can give you this in accordance with my rights as the guild representative. It will be necessary to enter the dungeon.」

「When entering the dungeon?」

「Yes. All the adventurers enter the dungeon at about the same time. Because of that, waiting is sometime necessary. You can use this card to go in immediately without waiting.」

「I see, thanks. I'll be grateful to receive this.When I return, should I return it?」

「Yes, that would be helpful. With that, how about maps of the dungeon?」

「Though we've acquired maps down to the 3rd floor from Margrace Rowlocks, are there any more detailed maps?」

「No, as for what's being sold at the moment, the 3rd floor is the newest one. Though there are parties that has gone past that, any information they provide would only be out of good intentions.....」

After Elena put the card in her pocket, the matter about the dungeon was finished. After a few seconds of silence, Walker spoke up again.

「So you mentioned that there were two matters of business, one was the matter of the dungeon, what's the other?」

「Umu~, actually, we were attacked by a strange monster when we came here from the city of Gimuru.」

「Strange? Is it a new species of monster?」

「Maybe. Can you define something that melted away without leaving a magic stone after being defeated a monster? In addition, its strength is at least a B rank monster.」

「.....That, is that true?」

That's strange. Ara took a step forward to Walker, who seemed to be doubting the authenticity of the story in this situation.

「Are you saying that Elena-sama is lying!?!」

「No. However, as the guild representative, I can't just easily believe a story that such a monster appeared.However, there were some circumstances. I should say that I could believe it.」

「Hou~? You have some thoughts? Please continue.」

Walker nodded at Elena's words.

「Actually, several trading groups that left here in the past few weeks have

gone missing. There were also merchants that left Gimuru for here.」

「Escort?」

「Of course we gave them escorts. Please wait a moment.」

He took the documents which were placed at the corner of the desk and turned one of the pages as he said that.

「The highest rank escort was C rank. The lowest escort rank was F rank. If the monster had a considerable strength, B rank as Elena-sama mentioned, the result would have been quite severe.Are you certain it has the strength of a B rank monster?」

「Ahh, Rei can testify.」

「.....Rei?」

「If you're with the guild, you should have heard about the story of the Orc Village? He's the person who defeated the B rank monster, the Orc King, who was leading the Orcs at the time. Rei.」

Prompted by Elena, Rei came forward.

「I'm Rei. The monster we fought along the way certainly had strength at the same level as the Orc King. It was a huge mantis that had 4 scythes and had an armoured body like a beetle. We can also confirm that it could become invisible and disappear from the surroundings as well as use an ability similar to wind magic. After defeating it, it melted away and produced a foul smelling odour. By the way, the liquid that dissolved the mantis was toxic enough that it also melted away the grass that grew on the ground.」

「.....I understand. This matter will be reported to the guild in the city of Gimuru. As for the mantis monster, I hope it was only a single rare species or something.....」

「According to Rei's view, he's of the opinion that it was something made with alchemy.」

「I see, an alchemist. Thank you very much, allow me to spread the information around here.」

Thus, the important matter of the mantis was reported and they decided to return to the inn to soothe their fatigue from the journey.

And the next day, they challenged the dungeon.

Chapter 74

Early morning the next day, they finally went to the dungeons grounds. Elena immediately led all the members of her party to the dungeon.

Ara and Rei were the party's vanguard. Elena and Kuust were the middle guard. Vel was the rear guard. Along with the 5 people was Set, who was a reserve force.

The air had cooled down significantly compared to the height of summer. The sky had cleared up enough to be called a fine autumn day.

Advancing through the village on foot and feeling the weather on their skin were adventurers probably heading for the dungeon. They ranged from parties of 5 to people going solo. Rei could also see a few parties of up to 10 people.

Though everyone who saw Set for the first time tensed up for a moment, they were relieved after they saw the Necklace of Subservient Monster. They were then stunned after seeing Elena's pretty face before Kuust and Ara gave them a sharp glare. This pattern continued as they went.

There were also people, who were probably mages, who weren't in the guild last night. Several people froze before edging away after seeing Rei.

「As I thought, there are mobs of commoners looking at Elena like that. This is why.....」

Hearing Kuust muttering like that in dissatisfaction, Elena calmed Kuust down while smiling wryly.

「Kuust, its normal for us to attract attention. I don't mind it and there's no need for you to be worried about it. Also refrain from making remarks about commoners. The reason is that most of the people here are commoners. They will only be an inconvenience if you displease them.And from the battlefield, you understand those lustful eyes have no relation to whether they are commoners or nobles, do you not?」

「.....Yes, I'm sorry.」

Elena knew she was a beautiful girl. She had been made aware of it due to the

label of beautiful being constantly stuck on her for most of her life. She had already become accustomed to the looks from men. Because of that, she wasn't really fazed when those kinds of eyes looked at her. However, if someone went crazy and attacked her, she would naturally pull out her sword whip. Because of that, there were a considerable number of people that had been injured like that, both nobles and commoners.

Ara spoke to Elena in an apologetic voice.

「Maybe it would have been better if we had went to the dungeon in the carriage.」

「You know, Ara. Though that would be fine, can we head for the lowest layer of the dungeon, the 7th floor, in the carriage? We will be staying for several days at the very least. What would happen to the carriage in the meantime. Surely we couldn't leave it outside the dungeon the whole time?」

「Haa. Vel is thoughtless. I even had a person at the inn take care of it. Rather, I should have been the driver from the beginning.」

「.....I wonder who is the thoughtless one.」

Fun~, Vel gave a snort at Ara's response.

「Wai-, what are you saying. What part of me is thoughtless.」

「Are you listening? The carriage is pulled by a war horse and it has exceptionally high abilities.」

「That's right. It's suitable for that kid to pull Elena's carriage.」

「Haven't you understood yet? The pride of a war horse with such abilities is high as well. He wouldn't listen to instructions from people who they don't recognise.」

「.....Eh?」

「You, are you really a knight? That's at the level of common sense.」

「W-well if that's the case, even if it's not that kid, you could still borrow other horses.」

「And make the war horse sulky?」

「Guh.....」

After being completely refuted by Vel, Ara was either embarrassed or angry at being disgraced in front of Elena, who she adored. Either way, she fell silent as her face went red.

Fortunately, the village was built around the dungeon and lucky for both Ara and Vel, it didn't take long to arrive at the entrance.

「Well, they're line up quite well.」

A number of adventurers were lined up at the entrance of the dungeon. Roughly 30 people or so. about ten parties.

「Elena-sama, what do you want to do? You can enter first with the card you got yesterday.」

「.....That's right. It's a long way to the Altar of Inheritance. I don't want to spend unnecessary time here. Before that, I would like to confirm each of our equipment. Weapons and armour. Are there any problems with the number of instant use potions you have each?」

At Elena's words, everyone checked their equipment on the spot. However, unlike the others, Rei only took the Death Scythe out of the Misty Ring. Because things like potions could be taken out of the Misty Ring at any time, he didn't take anything other than the Death Scythe out.

「Guru~」

Even Set came over and rubbed his head while giving a cry. His equipment and accessories were the two bracelets on his forefeet, the Bracelet of Herculean Strength and the Bracelet of Wind Manipulation. Separate from the Necklace of Subservient Monster, the necklace Love of Shizukuishi completed his set of equipment.

.....In fact, it was very rare for summoned or tamed monsters to be equipped with magic items. Either way, Set was equipped with a set of three first class magic items produced by Esta Nord, the alchemist of the organisation Zepairu created.

「Elena-sama, I have no problems. I can start at any time.」

「Same with me.」

「I can go at any time.」

Kuust, Ara and Vel each told Elena. Rei gave a silent nod and Set a cry.

Elena heard them and checked her own equipment, her sword whip, amour, cloak and other magic items like her shoes. She also checked her types of

potions.

「It seems everyone is ready. Now then, let's go.」

Elena declared and went towards the guild staff member who was at the front of the entrance next to the queue.

「Do you have a moment?」

「Do you need something? If you want to enter the dungeon, line up at the end of the queue.」

The guild staff member brusquely told them. Based on his looks, he was in his late forties and was probably a former adventurer. Still, as monsters could leave the dungeon and come out the entrance, he probably had a good amount of strength.

The way he handled his body left no openings and a worn sword and sheath could be seen hanging from his waist.

And above all, after seeing her, he didn't become fascinated and only had a slight change in expression, raising Elena's view of him. In addition, he had a considerable amount of courage and only raised his eyebrows slightly when he saw Set.

「Please look at this.」

She passed the card that she had received from Walker last night to the man. This showed that she had authority given to her by the representative of the guild.

「.....Tch, I understand. I can't complain after you showed that card. You can enter first.」

「Wai-, old man. What do you mean. Isn't it my turn!?!」

Though the solo adventurers proceeded to complain to the guild staff about the procedure, they went quiet immediately after he glared at them strongly.

「This card is proof that they are authorised by the guild representative. If that is taken out, we follow it.Buuut.」

Calling out to the adventurers at the front of the line, the guild staff member turned to look at Elena.

「It's troublesome to use this kind of thing so easily. Such an act would disturb the order too much. You should think a little more before doing something like this next time.」

「You, acting like that towards Elena-sama!」

Kuust almost held up his magic spear after hearing those rude and impudent words. However, Elena stopped him while holding the sheath of her sword whip.

「Stop it Kuust. Even if we have the authority, we certainly did cut in. It is natural for those who were delayed to be bitter.」

「.....Yes.」

At Elena's words, Kuust reluctantly stood down. Next to them, Ara also released her hand from the sheathed sword at her waist.

As for Rei, he just watched the exchange while stroking Set's back without doing anything in particular.

「I'm sorry but there are a variety of circumstances. If it is necessary to use power, there is no room for hesitation. May we go?」

「Ah. Though guild cards are normally required, there are no problems entering with that card. However, the records of one has to be kept here if you enter the dungeon. Do any of you have a guild card?」

At those words, Elena turned to look at Rei.

Impressively, Kuust, who disliked Rei, also turned to look at him.

(Well, because I would like to enter the dungeon quickly, I should speed up the process somehow.)

Muttering in his mind, he took his guild card out of the Misty Ring and passed it to the man.

Seeing that gesture, several adventurers who understood what he had looked at him with sharp eyes.....Rei ignored them as he had already gotten used to such looks. On the other hand, that said, Set stepped forward and gave a cry to threaten those who were looking at Rei's hand.

「Hou~, rank D at that age. You're quite a promising person. As one would

expect of someone employed by the nobles.」

He looked at the diminutive, 15 year old Rei with admiration before quickly writing down the contents of the guild card into a document. After less than a minutes, he returned the card to Rei.

「That's fine, you may enter the dungeon.」

「Umu~, thank you.」

Elena gave a generous bow before causally swinging her hair drills, leaving a strong impression on the surrounding adventurers.

As Elena entered the dungeon, the adventurers around her involuntarily looked at her admiringly.

The entrance to the dungeon itself was an ordinary set of stairs. They went down into the ground.

「Are the stairs also part of the dungeon?」

Though Ara asked Vel as they went down the stairs, the reply was in the negative.

「No, the stairs were prepared by the guild after the dungeon was formed. Here, this is the evidence.」

At the end of the stairs was a rustic door. As for what it was, it was something the guild installed to stop monsters from coming out the dungeon.

「In other words, past this door is the real dungeon.」

「Gururu~」

It wasn't far from the stairs to the door, but the path wasn't very wide.

But the voices of discontent soon disappeared after the door was opened. The width of the path past the door was considerably wide, even if Set spread out his wings, there was still space for several people to work freely.

「This, it's pretty wide.Do the walls emit light themselves?」

Kuust muttered, impressed, and touched the walls that emitted a faint light.

「According to the information I've gathered, walls that emit light seem to be a feature that is common to all dungeons. Well, depending on the layer, there

are places completely wrapped in darkness with no light so you shouldn't become careless.」

「By any chance, can you take the walls here back home and sell them for a considerable amount?」

Without thinking, Ara muttered. However, Vel shook his head with a wry smile.

「Did you think no adventurer has thought of that before? Even if you shaved off parts of the wall and brought them up, they don't seem to shine outside. It seems to be a dungeon only feature. According to one theory, the dungeon nucleus does this so as to not inconvenience the monsters that live inside the dungeon.....」

「The dungeon nucleus does that for the monsters? Is such a thing possible?」

「Kuust's question is reasonable, but anyhow, the dungeon can transfer monsters above ground into it to protect itself. Maybe the monster would hardly be active if it was completely dark?」

「.....I see. It certainly might be if you think about it.」

Kuust nodded at Vel's words.

Giving Kuust a glance, Elena took out a sheet of paper from a cloth bag hanging on the opposite side of her sheathed sword whip.

「Well then, touring the dungeon is fine but our purpose is the Altar of Inheritance in the lowest layer of the dungeon. However, the map only has up to the first 3 floors down, the lowest layer seems to be the 7th floor. At the very least, we will advance through places quickly with the map. Rei and Ara will take the vanguard. Kuust and I will be the middle guard. Vel will be the rear guard. I want to leave Set behind Vel just in case. Then let's go.」

Following Elena's instructions, their party advanced through the dungeon. As expected, most of the monsters that appeared on the first floor were monsters that were easy to deal with, such as Horned Rabbits and Giant Bats.

「Seriously.....I want you to understand the difference in strength.....ha!」

Swinging down her long sword with her astounding physical strength, Ara split the Horned Rabbit that came around a corner and rushed at her.

Next to her, Rei swung the Death Scythe down, cutting a Giant Bat, that was trying to make a sneak attack, in two.

「Gururu～」

And at the back, Set was cheerfully eating the meat of the Horned Rabbit monster.

Even if the material was stripped and the magic stones taken, it was clear that they wouldn't make much money. Because of that, Elena left them all to Set. Vel, who had been in charge of stripping materials, had no complaints in particular.

「Hey, Set.」

Cutting off the horn, which looked difficult to eat, Rei removed its internal organs before throwing the Horned Rabbit to Set to eat.

After catching it, Set almost swallowed it in one go. Though not even the fur was skinned, he didn't seem to mind it.

And although it was called a Giant Bat, most of its size was due to its wings. After cutting off its wings, it was only big enough to serve as a snack that could be eaten in bite by Set.

On a side note, it was disappointing to Rei that Set didn't acquire any new skills even after he ate the magic stones of the Horned Rabbits and Giant Bats.

It should be noted that the internal organs of the Horned Rabbits and the wings of the Giant Bats were just thrown out into the passageway. The Slimes, which were the cleaners of the dungeon would clean it all up. Because of that, it was an unspoken rule to not attack the Slimes.

The after about 30 minutes of walking, they reached the bottom of the first floor of the dungeon. Finally, they arrived at the stairs that went towards the second floor.

Chapter 75

Rei, who went down to the second level of the dungeon from the first level, advanced straight to the stairs to the third level while looking at the map.

「When they talked about the dungeon, I was wondering how difficult it would be.....this is easier than I thought!」

Ara muttered as she sliced a 1m long Poison Toad, which had jumped at her, with her sword.

Next to her, Rei shot a fire bullet at a Giant Bat that was waiting for an opportunity from above, turning it into charcoal.

「Because we're only 2 floors underground, it's still only for beginners.....ha!」

While replying to Ara, Vel shot an arrow into a large frog which was further away.

While watching the situation, Elena manipulated her sword whip, changing it from a sword to a whip as she tore apart the bats.

「The enemies are weak, but if there are a large number of them like right now, it's troublesome to deal with.」

「Certainly, it's as you say Elena-sama.」

Kuust nodded as he stabbed his magic spear into a Soldier Ant that had tried to approach Elena through a gap in their group.

「I think the dungeon nucleus is transferring in new monsters into the dungeon because the number of monsters inside the dungeon is decreasing. Such a thing was written in a book about dungeons.」

After cleaning up the monsters that attacked, Rei answered Elena as he cut off the wings of a bat before throwing it to Set to eat. In addition, he cut off the legs of the Poison Toads and stored them into the Misty Ring.

「I see, then that means we're just unlucky.Well, there won't be a problem if it's only enemies like this. Let's move quickly.」

Following Elena's instructions, they advanced towards the stairs going down

from the second floor. Around the time they were looking at the stairs indicated on the map.....

「We have guests.」say

While holding the Death Scythe, Rei muttered.

「What is it this time Rei-dono. Toads? Ants? Bats? To be honest, it's very troublesome to have to deal with such small fry.」

「No, it seems not, it would be troublesome if it was as you said. If you do say something, please make the dungeon nucleus give us a boss monster.Hm? Apparently Ara's wish has come true.」

「Yes?」

What Rei heard was neither the Kii~ Kii~ sound of a Giant Bat, the footsteps of a Soldier Ant or the bouncing sound of a Poison Toad. It was the sound of something walking on two feet.

「Guru~」

Set raised a cry from behind them. Though they were just sounds to Elena and the rest, as his partner, Rei noticed that it was a cry of caution.

「Elena-sama, apparently it's a pincer attack. Judging from Set's cry, the same kind of enemies from the front are also aiming at us from behind.」

「Hou~. The monsters we've encountered so far had no intelligence. But to make a pincer attack, apparently these next ones are different.」

「Well, even if you say that, since we're still on the second level of the dungeon, the monsters probably won't be a very high rank.」

Vel muttered while drawing back his bow. They were surely different monsters than those they had encountered in the passage until now. At the same time Vel said that, the monsters came into view.

「Goblins, is it.」

As Kuust muttered bitterly, 10 Goblins showed up from the passage ahead. Most were armed with long swords or daggers with simple shield and armour.

「.....Their equipment seems to be quite substantial for Goblins.」

「Perhaps they stole them from inside the dungeon or obtained them by

attacking adventurers.」

When Rei answered Elena, who was strangely impressed, a voice called out from behind them.

「Elena-sama, there are 5 armed Goblins behind us.」

Elena made snap decision at Vel's words. Though personal bravery was also there, it was because of her quick decision making that gave her the name General Princess.

「We don't have enough time to avoid fighting at at the back. There's no other way. Rei, can I leave the 5 Goblins at the back to just you and Set?」

「I don't have any problems with that.」

「Then I'll leave the rear to you. We will take care of the 10 Goblins at the front.」

「I understand, Then we'll clear them up at once.」

Rei nodded and moved to the back, past Elena and Vel.

「Gururu~」

Set greeted Rei with a cry. Looking ahead, there were 5 Goblins as Vel had said.

Normally, living creatures would feel the difference in status compared to a Griffon. However, unlike a forest, where they wouldn't have attacked, here was a dungeon. These Goblins had been transferred here by the dungeon nucleus. As a result, they had no hesitation in attacking an existence that they would normally never touch.

「There are two with long swords and three with daggers.You don't seem to be too happy Set.」

「Guru~」

Set nodded as if letting out a sigh. Any how, a Goblin's magic stone was worth very little and there were no materials that could be stripped. And as the meat was also very unpalatable, Set wasn't too happy about it. Their one saving grace was that at the very least, their right ears, proof of subjugation, could be handed in for 3 copper coins. The Goblins weapons could also be sold.

「.....No, that's no good.」

In the end, the intelligence of Goblins was low. Though they could carry out a pincer attack from two sides, such as now, the concept of weapon maintenance didn't exist to them. Because of that, the Goblin's weapons were rusted with what may be adventurer blood. They were not likely to be useful unless they were refurbished at a blacksmith or weapons shop even if they were collected. And even in such a case, the majority of them would have no major difference from the weapons that were usually sold.

「It can't be helped. Set, let's do it!」

「Gururu~!」

Giving a short cry at Rei's voice, Set kicked against the ground and went towards the goblins. At the same time, Rei readied the Death Scythe as he shortened the distance to the Goblins.

「Gyagyagya~!」

Though a Goblin stabbed at Set with a long sword as Rei called out to him, Set kicked against the ground and jumped towards the wall, causing the Goblin's long sword to miss, before jumping off the wall in a triangle jump to attack the Goblin.

「Gururururu~!」

Striking with his forefoot while letting out a courageous cry, adding the effect of the magic item, Bracelet of Herculean Strength, Set was wearing, the Goblin's head exploded.

The two Goblins on either side were stunned by Set's sudden triangle jump and were neatly divided into upper and lower halves with a single side sweep strike of Rei's Death Scythe.

「Two remaining!」

Rei turned his body while shouting. The next moment, a long sword that a Goblin had swung down went past the space that Rei had been in a moment before.

「Did you think you could get me with such an attack!」

Using the momentum from the Death Scythe, Rei spun his body around. It was a suitable distance for a long sword to be used, in other words, because the Goblin had gotten inside the Death Scythe's range, the blade couldn't hit it. However, Rei swung the Death Scythe without caring. The handle hit the Goblin. Unluckily for the Goblin, weighing over 100kg being swung with Rei's strength, the Death Scythe broke its ribs. The rest of its rib and spine were then broken as it crashed into the side walls of the dungeon, the shock destroying its internal organs. It died from the shock of the acute pain.

As the Goblin crumpled to the ground, spewing blood from its mouth, Rei turned to glance at Set. All there was was the corpse of the Goblin whose head had exploded from a single strike.

「Guru~」

How was that, Set seemed to proudly say. Rei gave a wry smile and stroked Set's head as he turned to look at Elena and the others.

Though he wondered whether he should go to help them, he immediately realised that he didn't need to butt in. Any how, all of Elena's escorts were capable people.Rather, even though there were some with character issues, such as Kuust, there were few problems with the strength of Elena's escort. It wasn't possible for such people to have trouble dealing with Goblins.

Vel shot arrows to restrain the Goblins. Ara closed the distance and swung her long sword, cleaving a Goblin in two. Her sword carried a surprising amount of strength with it. At the very least, every helmet worn by a Goblin had been cut straight through.

Next to her was a Goblin with a shield that had been pierced through by Kuust's magic spear. Then there was Elena, who used her sword whip to bypass the shield and cut their necks.

「As expected, I should say.」

Though the number of enemy Goblins had exceeded 10. More than half of them had been annihilated as if it was nothing. Because of that, Elena's skills stood out all the more.

After several minutes, all the Goblins that had attacked had all lost their lives

and were all lying on the ground.

Rei quickly cut off the right ears, the proof of subjugation, of the Goblins and stored them into the Misty Ring before continuing ahead with Elena and the others.

Following the formation before they had encountered the Goblins, Rei took the vanguard and Set followed at the tail end.

「Still, the Goblins didn't run away even at the very end.」

Elena muttered while advancing through the dungeon.

Goblins would become unreasonably aggressive if the opponent was weak. However, they also had the character of fleeing if they realised the enemy was stronger than them. But while fighting against Elena's group, they had fought to the very end without running away even though they knew that the other party was overwhelmingly stronger than them. As a result, they were annihilated. At any rate, it was more surprising that they fought to the last Goblin without being led by a high ranking or rare species.

「Some sort of brainwashing or consciousness operation was done by the dungeon nucleus when it transferred them here. Any how, even the Horned Rabbits and Giant Bats cooperated with each other on the first floor, even though they were different species.」

「.....Saying that reminds me. I think we should consider that all monsters here will work together with each other for the purpose of protecting the dungeon.」

Elena nodded at Rei's words.

And, as they were about to go ahead.....

「Everyone, stop!」

Vel suddenly said.

「Vel?」

Kuust asked as Vel silently went past Rei and Ara and began to search the ground. After a few minutes, a click echoed into the surroundings.

Everyone understood why Vel had stopped them just before.

「Whew, it's okay now. The trap has been disarmed. The trap would have shot arrows out if the switch was stepped on.」

Disarming a dungeon trap for the first time, Vel gave a smile and nodded to release the tension.

「A trap was placed at the location where we would have more or less defeated the Goblins and might have lowered our guard.Is this just a coincidence?」

「As expected, it probably isn't. It seems to be a targeted trap made by the monsters living in the dungeon.」

「Kuust thinks so as well.Indeed, this seems to be a rather nasty trap to be placed on the second floor. We will need to pay more attention from here on.」

Everyone nodded at Elena's words. The Goblins strength and arrows being shot out weren't much of a threat if considered separately. However, it was important that there was a monster that had the wisdom to take action and put the two together.

「We can't be careless even though we're on the upper layers. Everyone, don't lower your guards even if the monsters that come out aren't strong.」

Nodding at those words, they advanced along the passage towards the stairs down to the third floor while studying the map.

Should they say fortunately, other than the previous battle with the Goblins, they had arrived at the stairs without encountering any troubles with monsters.

However, Vel's voice shouted out from the back the moment Ara took the first step down the stairs.

「Rei, stop Ara!」

A voice called out at the same time Rei saw it and he reflexively grabbed the back of the armour around Ara's neck.

「Kya~! Rei-dono, what the hell!?!」

「Ara, take a good look at the stairs.」

Vel called out to Ara, who was glaring unhappily at Rei.

With a suspicious face, Ara carefully looked at the stairs. And what she saw

was.....

「This is.....thread?」

「Ah. That's probably from some sort of spider monster. It's amazingly thin and light. Even if you touched the thread, you probably wouldn't notice it. This is all the more for people like us and Ara, who are wearing armour.」

「So, naturally, such a thread wouldn't be placed here without any reason.」

Rei muttered, following Vel's words.

「That's right. I think this thread is probably the switch to some sort of trap.Well, it's there to catch out naive people, should I disarm it?」

At that question, Elena thought for a moment before slowly nodding.

「You're right. Though we only need to step over this thread to avoid it, it would be a bad shock if someone behind us triggered it and died because of that. Vel, I leave it to you.」

「Will do. Even though it will be done soon, take a break while waiting for me. If it's like this, the third floor is likely to be troublesome in various ways.」

「That may be true. That's fine, then we will take a break until Vel disarms the trap. Rei, please serve some simple food and drinks. I want to fill my stomach while I can.」

「I understand.」

Saying that, he took out stuff such as water bottles and sandwiches from the Misty Ring and handed them around.

Even Kuust, who disliked Rei, didn't mix his private and public matters, accepting them without a sound.

.....Of course, he didn't give any words of thanks.

20 minutes after successfully releasing the trap, they were able to safely go down to the third level.

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Rei went down the stairs and safely entered the third level underground. However, the moment he took his first step in the third floor, Rei reflexively swung the Death Scythe.

「-!？」

At the same time, Ara use her sword to repel something that flew towards her.

「Tch, as expected. It's that.」

Looking at the thing twisted around the handle of the Death Scythe, Rei muttered seriously.

A white thread was there. The white thread stretched towards the ceiling of the dungeon. At the ceiling was a spider, about 2m in length with over 20 eyes at first glance. It turned to look at Rei without emotion.

「Was the trap at the stairs the work of this thing? Also.....」

Elena, Kuust and Vel, who wer behind Ara glared at something which was bigger than a human and had green scales covering its hands and feet. They were demi-humans with a face of a reptile and a thick, long tail. Lizardmen.

Armed with bows, swords and spears, they glared at Ara with hostility, as if looking at prey.

「Rei, you do something about the spider. If possible, it would be great if you could finish that quickly and come to help us as soon as possible.」

Waving her sword whip, Elena gave a sharp cry as she used it's whip form to fling it at the Lizardmen.

The blade of the sword extended and curved like a whip to attack, causing several of them to suffer wounds that weren't minor and throwing them into confusion. Taking advantage of that, Ara repeatedly stabbed out with her long sword. As Rei wasn't available, Kuust stepped forward to the vanguard with his magic spear. Supporting them were Vel, covering the two with his bow, and

Elena. The sword whip seemed to move through the air like a snake with quick movements as it struck the Lizardman with the bow, who was about to shoot.

Even while watching the situation from the side, Rei pulled on the thread that had twisted itself around the Death Scythe to drag the spider down from the ceiling. As if understanding what would happen if it fell, the spider desperately resisted as it pierced its legs into the ceiling.

「Tch, a waste of time. Set!」

「Gururu~!」

Waiting for that, Set flapped his wings as he kicked against the ground. Using that momentum, he used his claws to run up the wall towards the spider.

「Kikiki~」

The spider pushed against the ceiling with and gave a cry that sounded like metal rubbing against each other as it tried to avoid Set's strike. But.....

「The moment I was waiting for!」

To avoid Set's attack, it had to move from its position of being stuck to the ceiling. In other words, it had to move it's legs out of the ceiling. It was forcibly pulled down without being able to give any resistance by the thread twisted around the Death Scythe.

「Kyi~!」

Though it was originally a spider, which shouldn't have any cry, maybe because it was a monster, it gave a scream of intimidation.

It probably suffered some damage from being pulled to the ground. Though Rei tried to cut it with the Death Scythe when its movements slowed, the spider opened it's mouth at that moment, spiting out some kind of liquid.

「Tch!」

Due to his intuition, he immediate fell back and took some distance after the spider spat out the liquid. Seeing that the liquid gave out smoke as it touched the ground when it landed, it was clear that his choice had been the right one. The huge spider then noticed the figure of Set, trying to attack from above, with his compound eyes.

「Set, back!」

「Gururu~!」

Hearing Rei's sudden shout, it stopped its fall by kicking against the wall with his hind feet before changing direction in mid air. At the same time, innumerable were shot from the abdomen of the huge spider, sticking to the ceiling without catching Set. If he had continued his attack from above, there was no doubt Set would have been tangled by them.

「Thread and poison, both are difficult long range attacks for Set and me to deal with.....it can't be helped, I'll have to give up the materials and magic stone.」

Muttering, Rei focused his magic. Set understood what Rei was trying to do by his actions and attacked the spider in order to turn its attention away from Rei.

『Flame, burn the enemy according to my thoughts.』

Pouring magic power into his words as he said the incantation, the laws of nature were twisted and a 50cm diameter ball of fire appeared at the tip of the Death Scythe's handle

『Fireball!!』

Swinging the handle, the fireball was shot out. By the time the huge spider noticed the heat approaching it, there was already no evading. Without a sound, its body was burnt and its body fluids boiled at the same time.

After Rei confirmed that fireball had hit, he immediately turned to look at the Lizardmen.

Lizardmen. Though they were D rank monster, the same rank as the Orcs he had defeated before, their intellect was clearly higher than that of the Orcs. Unlike Orcs, who merely obeyed orders from others higher up the hierarchy, Lizardmen would make their own decisions on what was the most suitable action and carry them out. Originally, it might have been possible to count them as a monster of a higher rank, because their reproductive abilities were low and their individual power wasn't far from and Orcs, their rank wasn't any higher. Still, their proof of subjugation, which was the tip of their tail, could be handed in at the guild for 5 silver coins.

As for the Lizardmen, with Elena commanding Kuust, Vel and Ara, it still wasn't an easy fight and the battle was about equal.

(No, I should admire the Lizardmen. The same number of Goblins were easily defeated on the floor before.)

While thinking like that, Rei noticed that the Lizardmen at the vanguard had fallen into a confused fight against Elena and that the rear had become separated.

「Elena-sama, I'll attack their rear with magic. Please be careful not to get caught in it!」

「Magic? I understand. We have heard it. Be careful to not get caught up in Rei's magic!」

While listening to Elena's words, he focused his mind and poured magic power into his words.

『Flame, pour down a rain of arrows and burn all. 』

At the same time he cast the spell, arrows made of fire, about the length of his arm, formed around Rei. About 50 were created.

『Fire Arrow Rain!』

At the same time the magic was activated, 50 arrows shot out in a large arc and literally poured down onto the Lizardmen at the back.

An innumerable number of fire arrows suddenly appeared. One Lizardmen who chose to defend by evading while others who chose to defend with their shields. As for the one who chose to evade, though he could avoid 1 to 2 arrows, with 10 arrows flying it couldn't dodge them all. A fire arrow pierced it the moment the Lizardman couldn't evade. Intense flames spread through his body in an instant, becoming a torch that illuminated the area, brighter than the walls of the dungeon that glittered faintly. Moreover, the Lizardmen who lifted their shield instead of evading were even more miserable. If what Rei had shot was a normal arrow, then it would have been the correct course of action. However, the arrows shot this time were not ordinary arrows but arrows made of fire.

「SHAAAAA-!」

As for the Lizardmen who had raised their shields, the fire arrows pierced their shield and spread flames from where they hit. Naturally, the flames not only spread along the shield but also up the arm holding the shield, burning both the shield and arm. As for the Lizardmen who lost their ability to move, due to the dulling of senses from the acute pain and shock, they were unable to dodge the flame arrows that followed. As for the one Lizardman who chose to evade, although he was hit by two fire arrows and had its whole body wrapped in flames, it wasn't for long.

A single blow. The Lizardmen that saw their rearguard fall into a state of annihilation from a single magic attack fell into a state of panic.

「ShAAAAAAAAAA-!」

Maybe the leader of the Lizardmen, a Lizardman bigger than the rest gave a loud shout to the others. Normally, they might have all collected themselves upon hearing that voice.Yes, if nothing was done. However.

「The enemy is confused! Take them down before they recover!」

Yes. Elena, referred to as the General Princess, wasn't going to make the fatal mistake of missing a chance when the enemy was confused.

The rearguard had been annihilated by Rei's magic and had lost all their strength. At the same time, the number of Lizardmen fighting Elena and the others had already been cut down to 10 and were slowly decreasing one by one.

A few minutes after Rei had cast his magic, the Lizardman leader who had raised his voice earlier was the only one remaining.

「Shashashasha-! !」

The Lizardman had a suitable appearance to lead the other Lizardmen. He was one size larger than the other Lizardmen and was 2m in height. His muscles seemed to burst out from the leather armour it wore, which seemed to be made from the skin of some monster. In his right hand, he held a huge great sword that was well over 1.5m long. His other hand held the only metal shield that the Lizardmen had.

The Lizard easily controlled the great sword with one hand and turned the tip

of it towards Elena.

「.....That fine, so you want a duel. I take it that you want me to be the opponent.」

Holding the sword whip in her hand, Elena took a step forward.

「Elena-sama! To fight against a monster in a duel! If it absolutely has to be done, let me substitute for you!」

Kuust tried to go ahead of Elena with his magic spear in his hand. However, Elena was the one who had been challenged for the duel and she made the decision.

「Kuust, that Lizardman over there is the one that led the rest of the Lizardmen.Adding to that, looking at its body, it's not an ordinary Lizardman. Rei, do you understand?」

Though the question was suddenly dumped on him, Rei answered without pausing for a moment.

「Possibly, I think that it might be a higher ranking Lizardman General. If that is so, then it's a rank C monster.」

「Hmm, as expected. It has a distinct personality compared to the other Lizardmen.」

「Elena-sama, if it is, it's even more dangerous. Please leave it to me.」

To Kuust, who began to speak with increasing fervor, Elena turned an unexpectedly sharp look.

「Too many words Kuust. Even though he's a monster, he's also a proud warrior. I cannot disregard his pride and refuse the duel.」

「Elena-sama!」

「.....Kuust. Too many words, I've said it. Are you going to make me say something 3 times?」

「Guh.....yes, I understand.」

Impaled by Elena's eyes, Kuust reluctantly pulled his spear back and stepped back.

「Elena-sama, I wish you good fortune in battle.」

Next to speak was Ara. However, her words were different from Kuust. She had firm faith that Elena would win the duel.

「Umu~, people call me the General Princess. I won't lose that easily.」

「Just saying, you probably shouldn't do this.」

「Hou~? Then Vel, will you also stop me? 」

「Though it would be good to stop it if I could, our princess isn't someone who can be stopped. Then all I can do is just watch.」

Elena gave a wry smile at Vel's words.

「Though I've said it many times, stop calling me princess. Though it's fine because you're saying it with good intentions, don't try to say that in strange places. I would be charged with lese majesty.」

「Yes, yes, I know.」

Vel sent Elena off in a light tone. Finally, the last one to call out to Elena was Rei.

「The strength of the General Princess, please let me see it with my own eyes.」

「Hmm, that's right. You're also watching and you have a strength equal to mine. I cannot show a bad fight.」

Elena gave a smile as she said that. What appeared on her lips was not a graceful smile as expected of a duke's daughter but a ferocious smile worthy for neighbouring countries to call her the General Princess.

「Guru~」

Set saw that smile and gave a cry to see Elena off.

With 4 people and 1 animal at the back, Elena faced the Lizardman General with her sword whip.

For several seconds, neither side moved.

「SAAAAAAAAA~!」

「Haaaa-! ! 」

They kicked against the ground at the same time and rapidly closed the distance. Elena, whose sword whip had the longer range than the great sword,

made the first move.

Wielding the sword whip, the tip of the blade drew an irregular arc as it went to cut the head of the Lizardman General.

「Sha~!」

However, the Lizardman General immediately used his great sword as a shield to block the attack. But.....

「Don't think it's over yet!」

Though the sword whip was driven back by the great sword, with a quick snap of Elena's wrist, the tip of the sword struck at his face again.

As expected, the irregular attack was not foreseen and his scaled left shoulder was cut, spewing blood.

「SHAAAA~!」

However, as if nothing had happened, in defiance of his injured arm, the Lizardman General threw his metal shield at Elena while using the pause of the sword whip to move into range for the great sword.

If Elena's weapon had just been a whip, the fight might have become advantageous for the Lizardman General. However, Elena's sword whip could be used as both a whip and a sword. Therefore.

Kin~!

As the great sword was swung with great force, it was caught by the sword whip that had returned to its sword form.

「Sha~!?!」

Though the Lizardman General only raised a voice of surprise at the sudden change of his duel opponent's weapon, to Elena, who exceeded first class swordsmen, this was a fatal opening.

「Haah!」

Sliding the sword whip diagonally up the great sword, she parried the attack of her opponent.....and used the opportunity to slice the sword blade into the side of the Lizardman General.....cutting and tearing!

「-!？」

The Lizardman General was split into top and bottom without understanding what had happened and died.

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Shin~, the dungeon fell silent.

The body of the Lizardman General was cut into top and bottom halves with a single swing of Elena's sword whip.

And after glancing at her dead duel opponent for an instant, she flicked the blood of the Lizardman off her sword whip before sheathing it.

「.....As expected of Elena-sama, it was splendid.」

The first to speak was Ara.

Even if she believed in Elena's strength, there was nothing absolute in combat. Knowing that, she didn't hold back with her praise while letting out a sigh of relief.

「Your swordplay was certainly splendid, but please consider your own position as well. Elena-sama isn't just an ordinary adventurer but is the daughter of the glorious Duke Kerebel. Anyhow, it's one thing if it was an enemy general, but to fight a monster in single combat is different.」

「Hahaha. Kuust, you said something similar when our princess went to fight the general of the Bestir Empire in single combat.」

「Vel! I am not saying this for the fun of it..」

While Kuust and Vel argued with each other, Rei handed Elena a clean handkerchief from the Misty Ring.

「Wipe away the enemy's blood.」

「Umu~, thank you.」

Wiping away the blood of the Lizardman General that had hit her cheek, she turned to look at the dead Lizardman after handing the handkerchief back to Rei.

「Rei, please collect the corpses of the Lizardmen. We will distribute the magic stones and materials after we leave the dungeon.You can have all of it if you want.」

「Though that would be nice, I understand that Elena-sama has various circumstances. Well, although I would be happy if that is possible, I won't force it. Margrave Rowlocks has already promised an exceptional reward for successfully completing the nominated request.」

「Really?」

「Yes. I was also able to become an acquaintance with someone like Elena-sama.」

「Fufu~, that certainly is so. The first gain for me this time was also to know someone like you Rei.」

Unintentionally, Elena gave the exact same smile as a few minutes ago as she fought the duel with the monster.

Though Rei was charmed by that smile for a moment, he gathered himself after Set used his beak to pull on Rei's robe.

「Oh, I'm sorry. We don't have that much time to spare, I'll quickly store everything.」

Saying that in a panic, he went with Set to store both halves of the Lizardman General, the rest of the Lizardmen and the burnt up corpse of the giant spider into the Misty Ring.

Kuust saw the earlier situation and involuntarily frowned his eyes. This was because he had heard the conversation between Rei and his boss, Elena.

「Oh wow. As expected of our princess. It's still only been several days since she met Rei and it's already like this.」

「Vel, it is rude to talk about Elena-sama like that.」

「Why. Didn't I only say the truth?」

「.....Vel.」

It wasn't the same easy voice that he had had been speaking with earlier, Kuust replied with a lower tone. And with his response, his eyes grew sharper than before.

However, Vel still replied in an easy going manner without changing his smile.

「Well you see, think about it normally. A beautiful girl that you've never seen with one of the best bodies. She has a light temper and is proud. Don't you

think it's impossible for someone to meet our princess and not like her? Leaving aside whether it is a feeling of love or friendship.]

「.....」

「With that said, Elena-sama's requirement is that her partner has to be at least stronger than her.Hey, then there aren't any problems with Rei in that regard right?」

Muttering that, Vel felt Kuust's magic spear pass right past his face.

「Vel, don't say anymore. I don't want to stab you with this spear.」

「.....Well, that's fine. If Kuust says so, we'll leave it here.」

「Hmph.」

At Vel's scornful laugh, Kuust pulled back his spear.

「Both of you. Are you going to argue in a place like this?」

Ara, who had been taking care of Elena, glared at the two of them in amazement.

「We're not arguing. I just have a slight disagreement with that guy.」

「.....Really? Anyhow, what Vel said was excessive.」

「Wai-!? Can I at least finish explaining why!?!」

「I naturally understand when I see your usual, everyday, attitude Vel.」

「Ara, that's fine. This isn't a place to keep talking. Pay attention from now on.」

Kuust spit out a sigh after breaking off the argument, that had started before they realised it, and went back to the usual atmosphere.

After Rei finished collecting the corpses, they advanced through the dungeon without any particular change in the atmosphere.

「Hmm, this is the third floor down. It's very different from the previous two floors.」

It was after the battle with the Lizardmen, about 10 minutes walk from the stairs down to the third floor. Though it was a normal dungeon just before, the place that appeared before Rei's eyes now was a forest of huge mushrooms.

Starting from a height of 2m, huge mushrooms up to 5m tall were growing everywhere.

「This is.....it really is unexpected.」

Maybe because mushrooms in the dungeon were unexpected, Kuust muttered with a shocked expression.

Vel and Ara also had looks of astonishment as they stood next to Kuust.

Rei was also amazed, but not to the extent of the other three, as he looked at the surrounding area with interest.

「Guru~?」

Meanwhile, Set only tilted his head without any change in expression.

However, the sightseeing attitude of the party ended with a single sound.

The first to notice was Set, who had far superior senses than humans.

「Gururu~」

Set raised a vigilant cry as he pulled on Rei's robe.

Rei noticed it at the same time as Set.

「Elena-sama, something.....no, is that a voice?」

He was going to warn Elena that monsters were approaching, but was confused after hearing the voices of people.

Because they were the first people to enter the dungeon today, he hadn't recalled passing by any people who had entered the dungeon after them. However, he understood immediately. If they were heading towards here, it meant that they were trying to get to the stairs to the upper levels. In other words.....

「Rei, what is it?」

「.....No. It seems a party that spent the night in the dungeon is coming towards here. At first, I thought they were monsters because I only heard the sounds of them approaching, but now I can hear people's voices.」

「Hmm, I see. There certainly is a limit to how many levels you can go into the dungeon in one day considering how wide each level is. That's why we prepared tools such as tents for camping. Well then, what should we do in this case as adventurers?」

「That's right. According to a story I heard from Elk previously, generally, you should give a light greeting without showing any hostility.....」

Rei said uncomfortably.

After all, anyone could become an adventurer by registering in the guild. Because of that, there were naturally nasty adventurers as well. Adventurers who attacked other people to steal their belongings existed as well. And in the dungeon that Rei was in now, there wouldn't be any trouble if no one was able to complain about any events that occurred. If anything happened, it would probably be judged that they died in the dungeon. Elena gave a serious nod as Rei explained the circumstances to her.

「That's good. Then let's wait to see the attitude of the other party. If the party is just passing by looking for something, there's no problem. However, if they are bandits like Rei mentioned, we'll know immediately from experience.」

Nodding at Elena's instructions, they waited where they were.

Eventually, after 5 minutes, not just Set and Rei, Elena and the others could hear the sound of walking coming from the forest of mushrooms. Mixed in were also the sounds of armour rubbing against each other.

Soon, the shadows of people could be seen from a 3m tall mushroom.

There were four people. All the members were men. There was an agile looking man who seemed to be a thief and two warriors, one holding a halberd, with the characteristics of a spear and axe and another holding a bastard sword. At the tail end was a man carrying a huge rucksack on his back. All of them were probably in their twenties.

「Hm?」

Before long, the thief, who was walking ahead, stopped and looked at Rei suspiciously. The two warriors at the back also stopped to look at Rei with caution as they stepped forward to either side of the thief. For an instant, the thief glanced at Elena before looking at the Griffon.

「Rei, they are adventurers. I'll leave it to you. Be nice but cut them down without hesitation if they attack.」

Receiving instructions from Elena, Rei stepped forward with a nod. Carrying the Death Scythe on his shoulder, it wasn't a combat posture but he could immediately respond if he had to fight.

The first to speak was the thief, who was at the front of the party.

「Hey, it's unexpected to meet someone here.」

「An unexpected meeting, that's a funny thing because you're the first other people that we've encountered since we started exploring the dungeon.By the way, we were the first people to enter the dungeon this morning and came straight here.....how about you?」

「Hm? Ah, we came here for a request to obtain some materials from a monster down here. In addition, we had to spend yesterday night in the dungeon since the monster only appears at night.」

「Heh, staying in the dungeon. That's quite brave of you.」

「Well, we are an experience C rank party.They are?」

Speaking about their circumstances, next was Rei's turn as the man asked back.

Rei turned to look at Elena for a moment and spoke up after seeing her give a slight nod.

「We have some business down here. Ah, I'm Rei, a rank D adventurer. My client is the noble over there.」

「.....Hou~. Nobles, is it.」

Muttering, the male thief nodded. Though it was only slightly, Rei's wariness faded slightly at that sign.

The other party might also have been cautious that Rei's party were bandits.

「It looks like we have no particular problems with each other then.」

「Ahh, I am a bit interested in that frightfully beautiful girl over there and the Griffon as well.....」

「Hey Zach. Let's head up quickly if there's no problems. Don't be irresponsible, I want to go to sleep without having to be on guard all the time.」

「Okay.」

Zach, the man holding the halberd, replied after the thief spoke to him. The

thief tapped Rei's shoulder lightly while smiling.

「We're going back up but take note that there are a lot of troublesome monsters further down. Particularly troublesome if you can't use magic is the fifth floor where there are a lot of undead monsters.」

「No problem, I think you can understand if you see my clothing, but I'm a magician. 」

Saying that, people from the other party immediately interjected.

『Wait a moment.』

Rei gave a wry smile at the two voices that interjected at the same time.

「Saying you're a magician with such a huge weapon, normally I wouldn't believe that.」

「Yeah, actually, your way of walking is closer to a warrior than a mage.」

At the unanimous response of the two warriors, Rei gave a light shrug.

「Well, that's certainly not a mistake. To be precise, I'm a warrior that can use magic, I'm a magic warrior.」

「.....I see, if that's the case, I understand.」

As the male thief nodded, the man carrying the huge sack spoke up.

「If we have no problems with each other, then should we say goodbye? I want to go back up, eat a full meal at the inn and sleep soundly without having to worry about anything.」

「Hm? Ah, that's right. Then we must get going. Though I mentioned it earlier, be careful about the undead that wander about on the fifth floor.」

「Ah. Thank you. Normally, wouldn't you monopolize such information to yourselves?」

「What, don't mind it. I got the information in the same way and this chance meeting also allowed me to meet a magic warrior. Well then, I'm sorry but we have to go. I hope that you finish your search safely.」

As the thief said that, they went in a different direction and parted ways from Rei and Elena's group.

Rei and Elena went to the stairs down to the fourth floor while the other men

went to the staircase up towards the second floor.

「.....Hey, what do you think?」

The male warrior with the halberd murmured when they were far away enough from Rei.

He didn't need to say what he was asking about. It was about the strange party they had talked with earlier.

「First of all, that blonde girl is a fantastic one of a kind. For girls over 20, I've seen a lot, I've even spent a night with a high class prostitute, but it's the first time I've seen a girl like that.How to say it, it's the first time I've lost my nerve talking to a girl.」

The companions of the swordsman gave wry smiles at the his words. This was because it was a well known fact that he was an extreme womaniser who visited brothels every night. A large portion of their income as a C rank party, of course after distribution within the part, was spent on prostitutes by him.

「As for me, I was worried about the Griffon. How to put it, it's the first time I've seen a real Griffon.」

The Griffon left a strong impression on the male thief. An A rank monster, a monster strong enough to be called the shinigami of the sky. As a thief, he was skilled in judging the strength of others, still, the Griffon they saw earlier exceeded his imagination. It was an existence at a completely different level.

「There was also girl and the Griffon, but it interested me that they didn't have a porter.」

A man muttered while carrying a huge backpack

Porter. To be brief, it was what people who carried things like treasures, materials and magic stones for other were called. It was natural if you thought about it. The movements of warriors and mages would obviously get duller if they carried the materials and magic stones as they went through the dungeon. If warriors and mages had their movements dulled, it would become harder for them to deal with monsters. The people who solved that problem were porters, who specialised in carrying those items.

「.....That reminds me, there was the guy stupidly huge scythe, a spear man, two female warriors and an archer.」

The man with the sword muttered as he thought back.

「I know right? There's no one who enters a dungeon without a porter..... though it's not absolute, it's quite unusual.」

Hmm~, though they all racked their brains, they couldn't think of a reason and eventually went up and out of the dungeon.

As expected, there was no way they would have thought that the people they were talking to had an item box.

After that, though the men encountered several Lizardmen and goblins, they were successful in leaving after defeating them. After that, they submitted the materials for their request and received their reward. By the time they were sleeping soundly after celebrating at the bar, any thoughts about Rei had completely disappeared from their minds.

Chapter 78

「Rei! I'll leave the mushrooms at the back to you!」

Elena's voice echoed into the surroundings. Rei shouted out as he swept the Death Scythe from the side, cutting the body of a mushroom.

「Same with you Set, I still have strength to spare so I'm okay!」

「Gurururururu~!」

Answering Rei, Set destroyed the body of a mushroom with a strike from his forefeet.

It was about an hour after they encountered the party that had spent the night in the dungeon. Though Elena and the others had steadily made their way towards the stairs to the fourth floor, as soon as they got near, they were attacked by mushrooms in the nearby area.

The smallest were about 1m tall. The largest were about 3m tall. For some reason, tree like roots grew from the huge mushrooms, which allowed them to move. Fortunately, its only attack was to throw its body towards them. Though spores were spread out every time they were cut, they didn't seem to be toxic and didn't hurt them.

TLN: Uhhh.....so they are basically Treants but mushrooms, that's the best way I can put it.

「Tch, these mushrooms that grow on this third floor down are strange things.....but even if they're good at disguising themselves!」

Rei attacked again with the Death Scythe and cut the body of a 2m tall mushroom. As the upper part of the mushroom fell towards Rei, he struck it with the handle of the Death Scythe.

Rei glanced to the front for an instant and saw Elena surrounded by an overwhelming majority of the mushrooms.

(It's troublesome right now.Rather, Elena will tire out before Set and me. Shit, those people from before should have told us about such a monster back

then. Could it be that they didn't know?Wait. They didn't know? In other words, they weren't attacked by these guys?)

While he was thinking about that, the mushrooms continued to attack without stopping. Rei shouted out to Set as he grouped up three mushrooms and cut them with a side sweep of the Death Scythe.

「Aye, they're persistent-! Set, buy me some time!」
「Gurururururu~!」

Set gave a sharp cry to acknowledge Rei's words. Rei heard the cry and jumped back, he started saying an incantation as he poured magic power into the words.

『Thou art a being made of flame. Gather with the flame. Flap your great wings of flame!』

The flames gathered around the blade of the Death Scythe as he cast the spell. Before long, the flames changed to the figure of a bird.

As its size gradually increased, its spread out wings soon reached 3m in length.

『Phoenix conquer the sky!』

Completing the spell, the moment the phoenix flapped its flaming wings, Set kicked a mushroom over with his hind feet as a parting gift and used the force to land next to Rei.

At the same time that Set landed next to Rei, the mushroom was thrust inside the phoenix. As for the phoenix shaped flames, made with Rei's magic, true to its name, it flapped its wings like a bird as it burnt through the entire mushroom as it touched it. As for how hot the flames were, you could understand after seeing the flames spread and a mushroom turn to charcoal just several seconds after touching the phoenix. The phoenix flew among the mushrooms without holding back, burning one mushroom after another. Not even several minutes were required before all the mushrooms that had sneaked around the back had been burnt by Rei. And.....

「Elena-sama, I'll clear away the mushrooms! Please move back immediately.」

Hearing his voice and turning around for an instant to check, Elena made her decision after seeing that the mushrooms at the back had been wiped out.

「Kuust, Ara. You heard it? Fall back!」

While swinging her sword whip, Elena called out to the two people fighting at the front.

The sword whip extended out like a whip and cut through the body of a mushroom that tried to jump at Ara from the side. When Elena flicked her wrist, the body of the mushroom sliced through the inside, splitting it in two.

(These mushrooms, do they not feel pain? Though I've heard that monsters that don't feel pain aren't rare.....)

Inwardly muttering, she flicked her wrist again, cutting through the body of another mushroom that was beside the one she had just cut.

In the first place, the weapon known as the sword whip could take form as a sword or a whip with blades. Though its attack range was reasonably wide, the power of its attacks was not as great as Kuust's magic spear or Rei's Death Scythe. Because it can just return to sword form when a strong blow is needed, usually there aren't any problems. However, a problem arises when it has to be used from the position of the middle and rear guard.Moreover, though there would be no problems if they felt pain, these mushrooms had no sense of pain. For ordinary monsters, if they are wounded, they would naturally feel pain. That could be used as a form of restraint.

While thinking about that, she saw Ara cut down mushroom as Kuust stabbed it with his magic spear at the same time.....piercing the mushroom, a large number of Water Balls were created at the tip of the spear inside the mushroom, bursting its body the next moment.

And although the two of them tried to immediately move back according to Elena's instructions, two more mushrooms blocked their way.

「I won't let you!」

Elena cut the body of one mushroom with her sword whip as they tried to move towards the two people.

「I won't leave things like that!」

Vel continuously bombarded the other with arrows.

Though it was shot by an arrow, the mushroom continued to advance while taking damage. But although arrows couldn't knock it down, it was sufficient to slow its movement. One after the other, 2 arrows, 3 arrows, 4 arrows. With arrows being shot in quick succession, it bought enough time for the two people to fall back.

And.....

「That is, Rei-dono's magic.....」

As the phoenix shaped flames passed over Ara's head as she retreated, she muttered in blank surprise.

Even though she had no talent for magic, with her intuition as a warrior, she could feel how much magic power was placed into the phoenix. There was also its beauty.

As for Kuust, who had retreated next to Ara, he looked at the phoenix with unusual admiration.

「Oh, have you finally accepted Rei, Kuust?」

「Hmph, I have already recognised his ability. I just haven't accepted his character.」

At that reply. Vel gave a snort and laughed to tease Kuust.

As the figure of the phoenix disappeared, only a few mushrooms were left.

The remaining mushrooms were unceremoniously dispatched by Elena.

After originally struggling in a hard fight against the number of mushrooms because of the strangeness of ignoring any damage they suffered, their work was coming to an end.

But.....

「.....What? Rei, Vel. Say that again.」

Elena's voice echoed into the surroundings. Next to her, Kuust raised his eyebrows while Ara gave a puzzled look at Rei and Vel.

Though they looked at him like that, Vel repeated what he had said.

「I tried to collect the magic stones from the mushrooms, but I couldn't find them in their bodies. Plainly speaking, that means that the mushrooms weren't monsters.」

「But, factually, we were attacked by the mushrooms?」

Kuust also nodded at Elena's words.

「It's as you said Elena-sama. Well, considering they surrounded us and attacked from the front and back, it wouldn't be wrong to consider them as monsters.」

「I understand what Kuust wants to say. But Rei and I examined every section of the mushroom, there's no helping it. Would Kuust like to examine the mushrooms as well to find their magic stone?」

To Kuust, who didn't quite believe the results of the investigation, Vel retorted dissatisfied.

Even Kuust didn't think that Vel would have done a shoddy job and skimmed on the check. After all, although he usually had a light tone and attitude, he took his work seriously. But even if Kuust knew it, the words still came out involuntarily.

「Hmm, we might have been wrapped up in some strange trouble this time. First was the Mantis in the middle of the journey, then these mushrooms.」

Elena casually muttered those words. Because of those words, Rei unintentionally turned to look back at the mushrooms that hadn't been turned into charcoal and noticed something.

Though Elena had an expression of surprise at Rei's sudden movement, Rei went towards the bodies of the mushrooms without noticing it.

「Hey, what's wrong? The mushrooms don't seem to have any magic stones or materials that can be used. Didn't you check it just earlier?」

Ignoring the puzzled voice of Vel from behind, he examined the body again. However, this time he looked at the part that had grown tree like roots rather than the mushroom itself.

Grabbing part of it with his hand, he cut off part of it with the Mithril Knife before returning to Elena.

「So, did you learn anything?」

Though Elena called out to Rei, he only shook his head slightly.

「No. However, I was thinking about the words Elena-sama said earlier.」

「My words?」

「Yes. About the Mantis. As I said then, there is a possibility that the Mantis was a monster made from alchemy. And from examining them, the mushrooms that attacked us are the same as the mushrooms that grow on this level. Either way, cutting it up, it didn't have any internal organs that a monster would have, it didn't even have a magic stone which it should have. If you were to say what was the only difference between these and the other mushrooms, it would be the tree root like things it used to move.」

With just that, Elena understood what Rei wanted to say. Her beautiful eyebrows frowned slightly as she spoke up.

「In other words, the things like tree roots were created with alchemy?」

「In the end, it's only a guess.」

「Certainly, Rei's thought might be correct since there's no magic stone.....do you get it? If we had only encountered the Mantis on the highway to the dungeon, it could have possibly just been the experiment of a heretic alchemy master. But what about the case that we haven't finished going through the dungeon and were attacked by an alchemist's creations again?」

What Elena wanted to say could be understood. Kuust, Ara and Vel frowned their eyebrows while Rei nodded.

「Yes. If my thinking is correct.....」

「The Mantis and tree roots were aimed at us.」

「But Elena-sama, the fact that you've come to the dungeon is only known by a fraction of the Nobles Faction.」

To Ara's words, Vel gave a shrug and spoke up in his usual lighthearted voice

「In other words, there is someone in the Nobles Faction who wants to cause us trouble.」

「Vel! Such a thing, Elena-sama is part of the Nobles Faction!」

「That's right. But does that mean that there is no one that wants to cause trouble to Elena-sama, the symbol of the Nobles Faction?」

「.....There is a traitor, is it?」

「Well, there is only circumstantial evidence. In the first place, I don't know if these tree roots were actually made with alchemy.」

Vel said that while looking at the tree roots Rei held in his hand before turning to Elena and speaking again.

「The mantis melted away as soon as it was defeated as if to erase any evidence. Yet these roots are still here even after we defeated the mushrooms.Specifically, what do you think, Elena-sama?」

「If you think about it, the Mantis was probably unique and made by concentrating the best advancements into a single monster. On the other hand, if you assume these tree roots are made with alchemy, maybe the technology itself isn't important and whoever made them wouldn't be troubled if the technology used was found out.」

「In other words, are you saying that even if the monster with the tree roots was really created with alchemy, the technology being used is ordinary compared to what an alchemist would have used to make the Mantis?」

「That's right. If you look at the circumstantial evidence, you probably won't be wrong if you said it was the work of the same person. But in the end, circumstantial evidence is only circumstantial evidence. If it was said to be a coincidence, there is no evidence to refute that.Because of that, it is quite regrettable that we weren't able to secure any of the Mantis' material.」

Elena muttered while spitting out a sigh.

She had already established the matter that an alchemist was involved in this case for whatever reason.

「Anyhow, even if an alchemist sets things up, if we are vigilant, there will be no problems. We will reach the stairs to the fourth floor soon, focus your minds.」

All members nodded at those instructions. Rei stored the tree roots into the Misty Ring just in case before they continued to advance through the dungeon.

About an hour later, they discovered the stairs down to the fourth floor and cautiously went down.

The Alter of Inheritance was on the seventh floor, the lowest level. Though they finally gone through half the dungeon.....the map that Elena had was only up to the third floor. Without a map from hereon, they would have to literally fumble their way through the floors.

Chapter 79

「This is, also.....」

At the scene spread before his eyes, Rei muttered involuntarily.

Ara, who was in the vanguard like Rei, as well as Kuust and Elena, who were in the middle guard, had similar expressions. At the back, Vel's eyes were wide open in surprise at the view before him.

Only Set, who was next to Vel, gave a cry that seemed somewhat joyful.

「Uhh, there's no mistake that this is the fourth floor down right?」

「That's right. You also went down the stairs just now.」

At Ara's sudden mutter after she had gathered herself, Kuust affirmed her question.

「No, no. I understand Ara's confusion. I was truly surprised to see this suddenly before my eyes after going down the dungeon.」

Vel didn't lose his light tone when he spoke, but as expected he was surprised. He had spoken out half in shock.

「I mean.....why.....there is a forest in a dungeon, whyyyyyy! Furthermore, no matter how you think about it, why is there a thing like the sun as well!」

Yes, the scene that was before Rei's eyes couldn't be described as anything other than a forest. The sun like thing in the sky that Ara mentioned actually illuminated the area with light.

「Calm down Ara. This is a dungeon, it's a strange place where anything can happen. You will let your guard down if you get confused.」

Pon~, Elena called out and put a hand on Ara's shoulder to calm her down.

She probably pulled herself back together after hearing Elena's voice. Ara lowered her head with flushed face.

「Well then. This isn't about Ara but I'm certain you are all surprised at seeing the forest before us after coming down the dungeon, so first of all, everyone

calm down. Anyhow, unlike the third floor, we have no map for here. Unlike before, we can't head straight for the stairs down, finding the stairs to the fifth floor will be difficult. Because of that, everyone take a deep breath and adjust our mindset.」

Following Elena's words, everyone took a deep breath. In addition, the air they breathed in was certainly fresh air that would be found deep inside a forest and not what you would find in a dungeon.

「.....Now then. Let's take more care when we advance from here. I will move about the formation a bit. To use his skills as a thief, Vel will swap positions with Rei. Set and Rei will watch out for monster attacks from behind and above.」

「Oh, I finally get to show my special skills. My thief skills are much better in a forest compared to in the dungeon. Well, Rei. I leave the rear guard to you.」

「Leave it to us. You don't need to worry about attacks from behind, Set and I are accustomed to working together like this, we'll leave the front to you.」

「As expected of Rei. Full of confidence.」

Maybe they calmed down after taking a deep breath, Vel returned to his usual light tone as he swapped positions with Rei and made their preparations.

「So, Elena-sama. What direction will we go in?」

At Ara's question, Elena looked around while thinking for a few seconds before immediately shrugging.

「Now that we have no map, even if we advance, we'll have to rely on intuition. Then let's do this. Rei, choose the direction based on your intuition as an adventurer.」

「Huh? Me?」

「Umu~. Anyway, none of us can point the direction to go towards so none of us can act as a guide. It would be better to rely on Rei's intuition as an adventurer.」

Because Rei was suddenly ordered, as expected, he was somewhat troubled at being asked to use his intuition. Still, he looked around the surroundings.

「.....That's right. It looks like it will be difficult to break through this floor today, how about advancing while looking for a place to use as a camp in case of an emergency?」

「A camp? In that case.....near a river?」

「Yes. However, river.....what to say, because there is danger when monsters come to drink water, finding a good balance between the two is difficult.」

「That's true. However, if we need to spend the night on the fourth floor, it is important to secure a source of water.」

「I agree. Though we brought water in containers, we should save it for now.」

「Umu~, then lets move to try to find a water source first, either a river or a lake.....then which direction should we go in for that?」

Though Elena said that with a wry smile, Rei stroked Set's back while smiling.

「Set, can you smell or hear the sound of water?」

「Guru~」

Leave it to me, Set seemed to say at Rei's words. Elena saw that and was impressed at the five sense of a Griffon.

What surprised Rei the most was that even Kuust glanced over with an impressed look.

(Well, though there's also the method of flying over the sky with Set to look for a lake or river.....)

Though Rei thought of that, Set seemed to either smell or hear the sound of water and turned to the left side before giving a happy cry.

「As you can see, apparently, there seems to be a waterfront to the left. Is it okay to head over there?」

「Ah. I have no problems. Kuust, Vel, Ara. We will go to the left.」

Nodding at Elena's instructions, they proceeded in a line to the left.

Fortunately, even if it was called a forest, there were few trees to obstruct their path. Maybe because they were advancing in single file, they were able to proceed even without an open path like a road.

「Gurururu~」

About an hour after walking through the forest, Set gave a cry of warning.

Probably surprised at Set's sudden cry, Ara and Vel reflexively turned around.

「.....What's wrong?」

Rei replied to Elena's calm question as Set stayed wary of the surroundings.

「He seems to be cautious of the surrounding area. There may be monsters.」
「Near us? Which direction is it?」

「About that, it doesn't seem to be a single direction.」

「In that case, should we assume that some sort of monster that acts in groups has surrounded us?」

Everyone around Elena involuntarily frowned their eyebrows at her words.

Being surrounded was always a disadvantage to the ones being surrounded, although it was difficult to hide in a battlefield, it was no trouble to do so in a forest. It was clear that no matter how they were attacked, they were in a bad position.

「Elena-sama, should we prepare here?」

「I would like to do so, but isn't it useless since we can't even see the enemy?」

Ara's suggestion was immediately rejected, but she looked towards Rei who seemed to have thought of something after doing some thinking.

「Rei-dono will burn down the entire forest with his fire magic?」

「Rejected.」

「.....Why not?」

This time, Ara's idea was rejected by Rei, who she had hoped could use his fire magic.

In this situation, Vel spoke with an amazed expression.

「Burning the forest is fine, but what if we end up burning ourselves? No, the first injury we would take would be from the smoke.」

「Ugh.」

「You know. Let's not speak without thinking first.」

「You're all so noisy. There's no helping it if I mess up a little bit.」

「So you say, but in your case Ara, you make too many 'slight' mistakes.」

「Hey, the sense of tension isn't enough considering we're surrounded by enemies.」

Holding his magic spear, Kuust noted while maintaining his posture, ready to respond to an attack at any time.

But as expected of Vel and Ara, while bantering with each other, Ara had readied her sword while Vel had notched an arrow to his bow, ready to shoot at any time.

In the same way, Elena readied her sword whip and Rei his Death Scythe. Set lowered his body, ready to react to any attack from the surrounding area.

And.....

「Gurururururu~!」

The moment Set gave a loud cry, the enemy appeared from literally all directions.

Their appearance was close to that of a monkey. However, sharp fangs extended from their mouth and their skin was covered with water. The smallest ones were 60cm tall while the biggest were around 1m tall. However, there were about 20 of them surrounding Rei and the others.

「Monkeys covered in water!? It's like a monkey version of the Water Bear, they appeared in the monster dictionary, Water Monkeys.....was it?」

It was Elena who reacted to Rei's muttered words.

「Rei-, information on this monster!」

Rei swung the Death Scythe to intimidate the Water Monkeys, took some distance and spoke up as he recalled the contents written in the book.

「They are a D rank monster that can use magic of the water system. However, that is if they are alone. Their fur, which is covered in water, mainly reduces the damage they take from physical and magical fire system attacks. Because of that, wind system and earth system magic seem to be the most effective. If you use physical attacks, blunt weapons like clubs, hammers or axes can transmit the impact into them. Sharp attacks like stabs that can cut through the layer of water and their fur are also effective.」

「It's a pain that you can't use your most powerful magic.Then only my magic effective. After that is the weapons you mentioned. No, that reminds me Rei. Weren't you able to use some wind magic as well?」

「Yes. That said, the only wind magic I can use is the wind blade that I used at the time with the mantis.」

「No, that's better than nothing. Focus on that.....they're coming!」

It was the Water Monkeys that, seeing Elena and Rei talking, couldn't control their excitement in front of it's prey. Baring their fangs, they threw itself down from the trees. To support it, the others behind it shot out water balls, though they were considerably smaller than the ones the Water Bear had used.

「Flying Slash!」

Against the two Water Monkey that directly attacked, Rei used the Death Scythe's Flying Slash skill. The Flying Slash drew out an arc as Rei swung the Death Scythe, cutting both monkeys in two as it was about to attack Rei. At the same time, the Flying Slash left big scars on the trees in its way as it flew to the back.

「Kikiki~!」

Suddenly seeing its companions being split in two in mid air, it watched as the bodies hit the ground, spilling out the internal organs. A Water Monkey raised a cry of caution. However, it was too late. Though Elena's wind blade was considerably weaker compared to Rei's Flying Slash, on the the other hand, over 10 were shot out at the same time. Torn to pieces by the wind blades, this Water Monkey was unluckier than the one killed by Rei. Compared to the first two that died without feeling any pain, the next Water Monkey to receive Elena's attack had its hands, toes and part of its ear cut off by Elena's wind blades. Because the wind blades were lacking in power, they weren't able to cut off their hands and feet and could only cut halfway.

「Kikiki~! Kikikikiki~!」

Ara swung her sword down at the Water Monkey that fell and rolled on the ground several times while bleeding. Kuust then ran it through with his magic spear.

The water at its neck wasn't able to block Ara mighty blow, the sword removing its head from its body. The water covering its body was also split apart the moment the tip of Kuust's magic spear touched it and the spear pierced right through. Elena swung her sword whip, cutting through their bodies like the water wasn't there.

「Gurururururu~!」

Set's single blow ignored the water completely, cutting through both the water and skin of the Water Monkey. And because Set was equipped with the Bracelet of Herculean Strength, as the Water Monkey was struck, instead of being blasted away, its body was shattered, spraying its internal organs onto the trees in the surroundings.

The troop of monkeys immediately felt a sense of crisis after seeing their companions sink into a sea of blood. A Water Monkey that had thrown itself at Rei earlier immediately grabbed onto a branch and took some distance.

「Did they give up?」

「No, it's different.」

Vel denied Kuust's words. He held his bow, ready to shoot at any time, while watching the state of the Water Monkeys that surrounded them from the tree tops.

However, they must have realised that they can't deal with us with their current power?」

「They should be smart enough monsters.Look at their eyes. Does it look like they've given up?」

When Vel said that, Kuust observed the states of the Water Monkeys. Their eyes held hunger and hostility due to their companions being killed by what they considered to be prey. They also had no looks of shock or fear.

「In the end, monster are only like this. They can't see through the power of their opponents.」

The moment Kuust muttered that in disdain.

「Gaaaaaaaaaaaaa~!」

The ferocious roar resounded through the neighbouring area.

The Water Monkeys that were fighting with Rei before immediately disappeared into the forest without hesitation after hearing the roar.

It was like the withdrawal of soldiers given a command.

「I see. As expected, the reason why the monsters were all here was because

there was someone leading them.」

Though Rei watched the surroundings while hearing Elena's impressed murmuring, next to him, Set suddenly looked up at a big tree further into the forest and gave a cry.

Rei reflexively readied the Death Scythe at that cry. It was a Water Monkey that was considerably larger than the ones from the troop before. It was about 2m tall. Its large size was apparent when you considered that the largest Water Monkeys from before were only 1m tall.

(No doubt, it seems this is the guy that raised that roar just before.)

Maybe the huge Water Monkey noticed that it had been spotted, it disappeared into the forest depths after glancing at Rei, Elena and the others.

「Is that a Water Monkey? With that size, isn't more like a Water Gorilla than a Water Monkey? Rei, do you know anything about the sizes of Water Monkeys?」

「They are basically all small, the largest will only be about 1m tall.」

「There were some that big in the previous troop of monkeys.」

「Ah. In that case, it might be a rare or higher ranking species.....unfortunately, nothing was written about that in the book I read.」

「I see.It was a monster that had enough intelligence to signal a retreat after seeing that our fighting strength was dangerous. I wouldn't want to have to fight it.」

At Elena's murmur that floated into the surroundings, everyone seemed to nod in the minds.

Chapter 80

It was about an hour after leaving the place where they were attacked by the Water Monkeys. When Ara's sword cut through the bushes which seemed to be hiding something, they finally found what Rei had been looking for.

It was a fast flowing river. The water was clear and fish could be seen swimming inside.

「.....It's a bit late to say this, but aside from there being a forest in a dungeon, there's also a river? Where do you think we'll end up if we followed the river upstream?」

Vel asked lightly while checking the quality of the river water with some chemicals.

「In the first place, it's wrong to use your common sense in a dungeon. I've already stopped thinking too deeply about it.」

Ara kept her hand at her sword to guard Vel. Seeing that, Vel gave a wry smile.

「Right. Inspection has been completed. Elena-sama, there doesn't seem to be any particular problems with the water quality, it's safe to drink.」

「I see, good work. Well then.....where should we set up camp.....」

After thanking Vel, Elena took a look at the surroundings.

There was no doubt that the waterside was a place for monsters to drink water, if adventurers camped here without care, it was like asking to be attacked.

Because of that, somewhere near the water source that wasn't conspicuous from the outside was desirable.....

「Gururu~」

To Elena, who was searching the surroundings, Set approached and gave a cry.

「What is it Set? Please ask Rei if you're hungry. I don't have any food for you

to eat with me.」

「Guru～」

That's not it, Set seemed to say as he turned to face part of the forest near the river. Elena also turned to see what he was looking at but didn't seem to understand what Set was trying to point out.

「Rei, do you know what Set is saying?」

「I think maybe the place Set is facing is suitable to set up camp.」

「.....Was Set trying to tell me?」

「He's smarter than ordinary monsters. Though he can't speak words due to his physiology, he can understand what we're saying.」

「Hmm. Then let's take a look.」

Muttering that, as she took a step forward, Kuust followed after her in a panic.

「Elena-sama! Even if I know that Elena-sama is strong, please stop this absurdity of going into the forest by yourself! Not to mention that even if you say it's intelligent, searching the forest with a monster.....」

「.....Kuust. I certainly feel happy about your loyalty. However, I'm not impressed that you don't trust our partners that joined our party.」

「But!」

「Haa, well that's fine. I understand that your thoughts, growing up as a noble, won't change immediately. If you're so anxious, then you come as well.Rei, you too. Vel and Ara will watch the surroundings here.」

「Eh? I have to wait here!?!」

Though Ara muttered somewhat sulkily, Elena didn't mind it and advanced into the forest with Set in the lead and Kuust and Rei in tow.

「Something about Elena-sama has changed a little since Rei-dono joined.」

At Ara, who muttered that in a subdued tone, Vel looked at her from the side with a surprised look.

「Is that so? Though to me, she hasn't changed at all.」

「You, is there something wrong with your eyes? Would the past Elena-sama have as easily believed what others said?」

「However, isn't that because it's someones tamed monster? Finding a place to

camp is actually an important matter.」

「.....I really hope that's all it is.」

Ara muttered and glanced slightly lonely at Elena's back as she went into the forest.

Vel gave a shrug, saying that there was no helping it, and dutifully watched the surroundings.

「Guru~」

It was a few minutes after going back into the forest. The place where Set had stopped was a huge tree with a cave like opening that was wide enough for a few people to enter.

It didn't seem like there were any monsters lurking inside as dead leaves were piled up. There were no discarded corpses inside either.

「.....This feels too convenient.....」

Though Elena wondered about this camp location after finding it with this timing, it was a fact that it had been about 10 hours since they entered the dungeon. Because of that, she finally decided to set up camp here.

Moreover, Rei's assertion gave strong support that Set could be relied on. Beside them though, Kuust was ill humoured as usual.

After that, they promptly brought Ara and Vel to the location to set up camp. At any rate, though you could say it was a dungeon, sunset could still be seen.

「.....Really, what is with this dungeon? If there was light like a setting sun, I could still accept it, but I didn't think it could accurately make dusk into night.」

Vel muttered with an amazed voice as he looked up into the sky that was dyed a fiery orange because of the setting sun.

「Like I said, it's meaningless to think about every single thing in a dungeon.」
「No, I understand the theory behind it. But even we can't reproduce a setting sun like this.....」

Rei, who was gathering the necessary firewood for the night, overheard Ara and Vel's conversation and spoke up.

「Though it's only a guess, I could try to explain how it works, would you like to hear?」

「Really!? It doesn't matter if it's only a guess, tell us by all means. No, I mean, as expected of an apprentice of a great magician, it's different from a certain impulsive female warrior.」

「Wai-, Vel! Are you talking about me!?」

「I wonder. Well, it might be so if the person themselves realises it.」

Though Vel said so to tease Ara, Elena, who had been clearing the grass and dead wood from inside the tree, intervened.

「Vel, don't tease Ara too much. Rei, I'm also interested in your thoughts. If you don't mind, I would like to hear it as well.」

While nodding at Elena's words, Rei felt a sense of incongruity at how a duke's daughter was doing trivial chores.

However, though he had bluntly asked about it, the only reply was 『If the commander moves, the subordinates follow』.

In addition, though Kuust would normally never put up with handling trivial chores, given his pride as a noble, when his boss, Elena, started to move proactively, he couldn't remain the only person doing nothing and reluctantly helped out.

Being directly shown the example of subordinates following the commander's movements, Rei was convinced by Elena's words.

「Well, the idea isn't too complex. You should know that the dungeon nucleus teleports monsters into it to protect itself.」

「Umu~. When I received the order from my father, I did some investigations on dungeons back then.」

「Then I think you understand, the monsters that were sent in originally lived outside. In other words, they lived with day and night. What do you think would happen if they were suddenly sent into the dungeon? Even if they underwent some sort of suggestion or brainwashing when they were sent into the dungeon, it is highly likely that the instinct of the monster that it had been living somewhere with day and night would have been deeply ingrained into its body and would not be changed or erased. Though the inside of the dungeon has

been different up to now, the time cycle as you see is as a result of considering the monsters' conditions.....that is my guess. Of course, I understand that there are various flaws.」

「.....Certainly, if the monsters that defend the dungeon fall ill, their fighting power would become useless.」

Though Elena nodded at Rei's explanation, she spoke up after suddenly noticing something.

「However, if Rei's guess is right, shouldn't the inside of the dungeon be similar to the environment outside? For example, the first and second floors were like an ordinary dungeon, but the third floor down had mushrooms growing everywhere. The Lizardmen we fought there should normally live near water sources. When you think about it, as you said, there seem to be various flaws.」

「I agree. In the first place, maybe it's wrong to consider the thoughts of the dungeon nucleus like that of a person. Maybe the nucleus has it's own clear criteria as a nucleus, is it.....I've said too much. It's gradually getting dark, we should quickly finish preparations for setting up camp.」

「You're right. It's not great to have to set up camp in the dark.」

Elena nodded. Everyone else was of the same opinion and quickly set up camp.

「An item box is a really convenient thing.」

Elena muttered in admiration as she carried a spoonful of stew to her mouth. The hot pot of stew had been taken out of Misty Ring, still fresh and steaming.

As expected of a duke's daughter, though she was eating dinner at a camp at night, her gestures were still refined.

While impressed at her actions, Rei took some freshly baked bread out of the Misty Ring to eat.

「Certainly, the slowest forces of the Knights when marching are the supply corps. If there was a person with an item box, it is right to think that the speed at which they could march would speed up by several times.」

Vel spoke up with a light tone as usual. He had a glass of wine in one hand

and Poison Toad meat skewers in his other hand.

Of course, because they were still camping in a dungeon, it was only a light wine and was hardly different from fruit juice.

It should be noted that the Poison Toad skewers were made from the Poison Toads that Rei had killed and collected on the first floor. Vel had cut them up with his knife and roasted them on the campfire with some sauce that was taken out of the Misty Ring.

Ara and Kuust were also eating the fresh food that Rei had taken out of the Misty Ring and given to them.

Meanwhile, next to them and enjoying a luxurious dinner that you wouldn't think you could eat in a dungeon, Set ate the roasted meat of the Lizardmen that they had defeated on the third floor with great relish.

It should be noted that because of their value, the corpses of the Lizardman General and the huge spider were still stored in the Misty Ring.

Though Rei and Set were regretful that no skills were acquired after Set ate the magic stones of the Lizardmen, Set didn't have any problems with the taste of the Lizardman meat as he gave a happy cry.

With that, after everyone had finished their bread and stew, Elena spoke up.

「Well then, with this, we will be camping for the night.....how will we settle the watch? Normally in the military, the watch will be swapped every few hours.」

She turned to look at Rei, wanting to hear how the adventurers dealt with it. Judging that was what she was asking, Rei answered.

「I don't mind, it's basically the same. However, unlike the military or other adventurers, because we have Set, we almost don't need to worry about it.」

Rei stroked Set's body as Set tore off the roasted tail of a Lizardman and gave a cry.

It should be noted that the tip of the Lizardman tail that Set was eating had already been cut off for proof of subjugation.

「Anyhow, when it comes to the sharpness of the five senses, no human can

compare with Set's senses. Even if some monsters attack, Set can deal with them as long as it isn't a dungeon boss.However, I recommend that we take the watch in turns with Set in case anything comes up.」

「Though that's great, then wouldn't Set have no time to rest?」

「You don't need to worry about that. His five senses are always active even when he's resting his body, in the first place, as a Griffon, a high ranking monster, there's no problem with staying up for several days.Well, because Set likes to sleep, he wouldn't usually stay up all night willingly.....it another story since we're camping at night.」

「Hmm. Then we'll be relying on your words Rei. Are you fine with that?」

Elena asked while looking around. Because he would be able to relax comfortably, Vel welcomed it. Ara was the same. Though Kuust looked like he wanted to say something, because he had seen Set's excellence several times since leaving the city of Gimuru, no words left his mouth.

「There doesn't seem to be any problems. Then let's decide the watch order. First is Ara, then me, Kuust, Vel and Rei. Are there any problems?」

Though they were lightly told the order of the watch as if it was nothing much, Ara and Kuust immediately spoke out after hearing it.

「For Elena-sama to take the watch, you don't need to do that! Please leave it to us.」

「I am of the same opinion as Ara. As the Duke's daughter, you shouldn't need to take the watch.」

「Though I understand both your worries, it seems that we will have to camp in the dungeon at night for at least the next few days. Because of that, if I don't even take the watch, it would be a deplorable thing when you think about it. Remember, Worrying and pampering are two different things.」

「But-!」

Though Kuust was going to argue more strongly, he could only fall silent after Elena glared at him sharply.

Thus, Kuust and Ara both reluctantly agreed to let Elena take a shift of the watch.

And with that, the party spent their first night in the dungeon.

Chapter 81

Inside the opening of the tree, wearing his robe or mantle, Rei slept with a blanket over him, which he had taken out from the Misty Ring. Although there were sleeping bags, even if you said that Set was a Griffon and was keeping watch, he never knew when there might be a fight in the dungeon. This important note was pointed out by Elena who said that in an emergency, you wouldn't be able to immediately move if you were in a sleeping bag.

In addition, Kuust was originally against Elena sleeping with the rest of them, but was again given a speech and reluctantly agreed.

And while everyone was sleeping, Vel, who had been taking the watch, came over to Rei.

「Rei, are you awake? 」

Taking care to not disturb the others who were sleeping, Vel called out in a low voice.

「Hm?Ahh, is it time to change the watch?」

「That's right. As dawn is already nearing, I don't think there will be that many enemy attacks. On the other hand, it's also the easiest period to become careless. I'm counting on you.」

Nodding at Vel while yawning drowsily, Rei went out to take his place.

Rei saw about 10 dead Goblins piled up like a mountain outside. Next to them were the corpses of several Water Monkeys, like the ones that had attacked them during the day.

They seemed to be the monsters that had been killed when they had attacked during the previous watches.

「Gurururu~」

Staring intently at the corpses, Set, who had been lying near the opening of the tree, got up and slowly went to Rei.

「Are you hungry?」

「Guru～」

To answer Rei's question, Set gave a hungry cry. Although Rei gave a wry smile, he took out the Mithril Knife out from his waist and dismantled a Water Monkey that was next to the pile of dead Goblins. After cutting off the right ear, the proof of subjugation, Rei skinned the fur, which was now waterless as it was dead. As expected, after getting used to stripping off materials, his work advanced smoothly without confusion. The skinned fur was stored into the Misty Ring after the limbs, head, tail and internal organs were removed. After that, a hole was dug a small distance away to bury the internal organs and head.

「Well, before that.....Set.」

Calling Set, Rei held out the magic stone that he had taken out from the heart of the Water Monkey.

「Guru~!」

Holding the magic stone in his beak, Set swallowed it in one gulp, but.....

「It's no use?」

「Guru~.....」

Unfortunately, as no skills were acquired, both man and animal were somewhat depressed.

After that, the meat of the Water Monkey was cut into bite sized pieces and stabbed onto a tree branch so that they could be easily cooked on the campfire beside them.

As the smell from the meat cooking on the open fire gradually drifted out and stirred his appetite, Set gave a cry as he waited impatiently for the skewers to be cooked.

Time inside the forest at night passed quickly for Rei.

「Hey, it's hot.」

Sprinkling a small amount of salt, taken from the Misty Ring, onto the cooked Water Monkey meat skewers, Rei placed them onto an oversized leaf, used in place of a plate. After passing it to Set, Set held the skewers with his forefoot,

tore the meat off with his beak and swallowed it down while giving a cry.

While watching that, Rei also sprinkled some salt and pepper onto and skewer that was on the campfire and brought it to his mouth.

Although it was classified as a monkey, it didn't have much smell as a monster and Set ate until there was none left. After that, Rei just waited with Set for the night to pass without saying anything.

While listening to the pachi~, pachi~, sound of the campfire, he occasionally tossed in some firewood to keep it burning.

Taking a pot, some water and tea leaves from the Misty Ring, Rei brewed some tea to drink with Set.

In that way, the night passed slowly, as a bit of light shone from east.....Rei suddenly noticed some vibrations in the air.

「.....What? Just now, there was something like a vibration.....」

As Rei muttered, he felt his body shake slightly again. Listening, he could faintly hear a thudding noise. As the sound gradually grew louder, the vibrations grew proportionally larger.

(Considering the regular sounds, is it the footsteps of some sort of monster?)

While thinking to himself that he didn't want it to come towards them, the footsteps kept coming closer without going away.

「Given the timing of the footsteps, there should only be one of them. I can imagine it's size.」

Rei glanced towards the opening of the tree for a moment.

「It's dangerous to be caught here. In that case, would it be better to attack? Set, we'll head out.」

「Gururu~!」

Calling to Set, Rei went into the opening of the tree and woke up Ara, who was the closest.

「Haa? What's going on?」

「Wake up Ara. An enemy.」

「Enemy? An enemy.....enemy!?!」

Should he say, as expected of a Knight, Ara immediately reacted to the word enemy. While rubbing her eyes, she reached her hand out to her sword and sheath which had been placed nearby.

Maybe the noise made the people sleeping nearby notice something, Elena began to move restlessly.

「Because it seems to be a fairly large monster, if we fight it after it gets here, the area will be damaged. I will attack with Set, be cautious of the surroundings. I'm leaving it to you.」

「Ah, wai-, Rei-dono!?!」

Though Ara's voice called out from behind, he turned his eyes towards the direction the footsteps were coming from. Thud, thud, the sounds gradually came nearer. It wasn't difficult to guess where the footsteps were coming from.

Picking up the Death Scythe, which he had taken out as he was on night watch, he started to run towards the direction the sounds were coming from. Set silently followed beside him.

For a moment, Rei had thought about riding on Set to find the enemy from the sky, but in the end, they were in a forest. The trees grew thick and as the sun was still mostly hidden, he judged that it would be impossible to find the enemy from the sky.

It was few minutes after he started running. In just a few minutes, Rei met the existence heading towards them.

「GAAAaaaa-!」

The moment it saw Rei and Set, the existence opened its large mouth and raised its voice to intimidate them.

It was at least 5m tall and was probably of the Goblin family as its entire skin was green. However, its body was filled with an overwhelming amount of dense muscles. The club it held in its hand was simply an uprooted tree. As for its face, fangs grew from its mouth and its ugly features emphasized its brutality. Rei knew what the existence in front of him was from reading books. In other words.

「Ogre, is it.」

TLN: Based on the description, it is probably not Shrek.

Although it was part of the Goblin family, it was brutal and brash. Its strength was also incomparable to the F rank Goblins. That's why it was considered a higher ranking monster at rank C.

Facing it was Rei, who was considered short for a man at 165cm. The Ogre was nearly three times Rei's height and Rei's head only reached its knees. Looking at Rei as if it wanted to eat him after crushing him, it raised its club.

TLN: 165cm = short, Me = 165cm, Me = short, DX

However, the Ogre didn't know. The existence that was Rei. If it had known Rei's ability, rather than not taking any serious countermeasures, it would have swung its club with all its strength from the very beginning.

However, opposite to its physical ability, its intelligence was low. It had decided that Rei was an insignificant being based on his appearance alone.

Roar-!

The club swung down with the momentum as if to destroy everything it touched. It was a single attack with no thought put into technique. However, the attack that was made with only physical strength hid a violently destructive force.Yes, that was it hit.

「Such an attack is obvious!」

Jumping back, Rei provoked the Ogre with his eyes and words as the club made a small crater in the ground.

The Ogre couldn't understand human words. However, it was still able to fully understand the malicious intent against it. Yes, the diminutive creature that was only up to its knees was disrespecting it.

「GAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA-!」

As a simple Ogre, it went berserk at Rei's cheap provocation, raising its club again and smashing into the ground with increasing anger.

Then.....

「Set!」

Rei gave a sharp shout into the surroundings. As soon as his voice sounded, 5 Wind Arrows pierced into the Ogre's back, one after the other. The power of each Wind Arrow wasn't high, but they were enough to divert the Ogre's attention from Rei. And when the Ogre tried to turn around and face the back.

「GURURURURURU~!」

Set's claws tore deeply into the Ogre's back.

「GAAAAAAAAAAA-!」

It was probably aware of the injuries it had suffered. It swung its club around in frustration while turning to his back and roaring.

However, the figure of Set had already gone, only several feathers were left due to him flapping his wings and flying into the sky.

As the Ogre looked around to see the enemy that attacked its back, without a sound, Rei dashed forward and thrust the Death Scythe forward.

Without noticing the presence of Rei nearing it, the Ogre kept looking for the enemy that had hurt it while brandishing its club.

「Shoes of Sleipnir, start!」

Muttering in a low voice so as to not alert the Ogre, Rei ran across the the ground and leaped into the air with two steps. At a height over 5m, the figure of Rei could be seen above the head of the Ogre.

「Gaa~!?!」

「Haaa!」

As expected, maybe noticing the enemy at the same height as its line of sight, as Rei swung the magic empowered Death Scythe at its head, the Ogre almost simultaneously raised its club.But.

「GA-!?!」

The Death Scythe that was swung by Rei weighed over 100kg. Adding to that was Rei's inhuman strength. Moreover, for the magic empowered blade, cutting through the club, which was basically a tree, was met with no resistance. The

blade approached the head of the Ogre.....but because of its survival instincts, though it moved back, causing a massive wound to be torn into its chest, the attack didn't kill it.

「GAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA-!」

In front of itself was a small, insect like prey. It touched the wound that had been given by its prey, which was supposed to be its breakfast. Sticky red blood covered its hand. Smelling the metallic smell, the Ogre's anger reached its peak.

「GAAAA-!」

Like its first attack.....no, as it swung the club with all its strength, though the club was much shorter after being cut by the Death Scythe, Rei evaded the attack.

Though the attacks of the Ogre were slow, they carried a considerable power and threw up dirt and stones every time the club impacted the ground. Therefore, for Rei who normally evaded enemy attacks by a slim margin and counterattacked when they were off guard, he couldn't do what he was best at.

(Well, that's as much as I can do. My work has already been completed. We only have to wait for it to collapse.)

Moving to the side to avoid the attack swinging down, Rei then jumped as the next attack came sweeping along the ground. As the Ogre had no technique, it could only attack using one of two methods, swinging down and sweeping from the side. If it could even use its head a little, it could have smashed the other party with a single blow if it could do a feint. However, that was impossible to imagine as it was an Ogre. On the contrary, if a monster with the brutality and physical ability of an Ogre had intelligence as well, it would be far from rank C.

「Hey, what's wrong? Is your big body just for show?」

Without attacking, Rei concentrated on dodging its attacks while focusing on provoking it.

「GAAAAAAAAAAAAA-!」

Even if it didn't know the words, it knew that it was being insulted. The Ogre kept swinging its club in anger as if it didn't know fatigue.

Rei provoked it and only cut its skin and not its flesh with the Death Scythe to make fun of it. Alternatively, Rei would throw a palm sized ball of fire at it to burn it. Sometimes he would avoid the Ogre's attacks by running through its feet, and on occasion, he would smash the toes on the Ogre's feet with handle of the Death Scythe.

If the Ogre got angry and started to focus on Rei, Set would shoot Water Balls and Wind Arrows at it, slowly piling up the injuries.

How much time passed with this happening? It was probably more than 10 minutes. And finally, the moment came.

「G.....Gaa?」

The Ogre had a confused voice. It was because although it had tried to take a step forward, it barely moved. At the same time, its arms that it wanted to raise didn't move up.....it fell to the ground while spitting bubbles of blood from its mouth.

「Gururu~」

Set gave a cry and flapped his wings as he landed next to Rei. While stroking his back, Rei carefully checked if the Ogre was still breathing.

「Hah!」

The Death Scythe cut through the right shoulder of the Ogre, which had fallen onto the ground, cutting off the right arm with barely any resistance. Using its momentum the Death Scythe changed its trajectory in the air and swung back down at the muscle covered neck of the Ogre.....similar to its right shoulder, its head was cut off with barely any resistance.

「Puu~, even if it was still alive, it can't do anything if its head was cut off. Set, you did well. Was it Poison Claw? Although it's usable, it seems that the poison isn't very powerful as it's only Lvl 1. Or did the poison take time to take effect because of the Ogre's large body?」

「Gurururu~?」

Set tilted his neck indicating that he didn't know either.

Set made a fierce attack on the Ogre right after the fight had started. The skill

used in Set's claw attack right after the Wind Arrows was a skill that he had obtained after absorbing the magic stone of a rare species during the Treant with Milein while Rei was on his rank up test. Because Rei had received the nominated request immediately after the rank up test, he had been asked not to go out of the city. When they left the city for the dungeon, they were always with Elena. Because of that, they were finally able to test the skill only now.

「Well, anyhow, we were able to test the skill and we didn't take any damage. Congratulations are in order.」

「Guru~!」

Chapter 82

Rei looked at the corpse of the Ogre in front of him while experiencing the mysterious sensation of sunrise in a dungeon forest.

Blood was still gushing out from the severed right shoulder and neck. Rei decided to wait a bit for the blood to drain before storing it into the Misty Ring as it would be covered in blood if he stored it immediately.

「As expected, I'm tired after some morning exercise. Set, let's take a short break until the blood is all drained.」

「Guru~」

Nodding at Rei's words, Set lay down on ground on some grass where the blood didn't reach.

Rei gave a sigh and leaned back against Set's lion like body.

「Here.」

When Rei took out some pear like fruits from the Misty Ring, Set ate them while giving a happy cry.

Smiling like a mother watching her child, Rei took out his own share.

Even in such a relaxed state, Set's senses were always active and he suddenly turned his eyes into the forest. At the possibility of a new enemy, Rei reached out for the Death Scythe which he had put down. However, when he realised Set was looking at the direction of where they had camped last night, Rei released his hand from the Death Scythe.

Set was the same and stopped staring at that direction. And from that direction, the sounds of conversation and feet stepping on grass were eventually heard.

「Vel, is this the right way?」

「Yes it is. There's no doubt from the great smell of blood.」

「Smell of blood, is it. Hmph, that means there's a possibility that guy is dead.」

「Hey, Kuust. That's going too far.」

「That is so. In the first place, isn't it Rei and Set? If they fought with something like a dragon it would be different. However, I don't think there would be such monsters in this place.」

「.....Hmph~!」

「Kuust, you should have a sufficient understanding of Rei's ability, shouldn't you? You should fix that condescending attitude of yours. Rei doesn't seem to care, but it's not a pleasant thing to watch from the sides.」

「But Elena-sama!」

While exchanging words like so, emerging from the bushes, as expected, was Elena and the others.

「Uwa~, wait a moment. Everyone, over there. The strong smell of blood is coming from over there.」

Seeing the Ogre on the ground, still bleeding from its neck and right shoulder, let out a voice of amazement and shock.

Next to him, Ara and Kuust couldn't hide their surprise at the scene before them.

Meanwhile, only Elena calmly looked at the scene before spotting Rei and Set resting a short distance away.

「Rei, Set. It's good that you're unhurt. I was surprised when I heard that you had suddenly gone out but it doesn't seem you're hurt anywhere.」

Hearing that voice, the other three people also noticed figure of Set, who had plopped down on the ground, and Rei, who was leaning against Set.

Looking at the four people, Rei stood up with a wry smile and went toward Elena.

「As for the enemy you felt, was it this Ogre?」

「Yes, as you can see, it's huge. It made a considerable sound when just walking. I understood immediately after feeling the small tremors. Because of that, I went out as there was a possibility of the camp being damaged if we fought there.」

「.....That's right. I want to say something but your judgement wasn't wrong. In fact, you and Set took it down without taking any damage in particular.」

Speaking up to there, Elena finally turned to look at the Ogre, whose blood was starting to stop draining.

「So then, were you draining the blood?」

「Well, something like that. Though it isn't necessary if I store it into the item box as time doesn't pass.....since I cut off it's right arm and head, it ended up like this. It seems that even though the blood is flowing, it will still be stored into the item box in its flowing state.」

「I see. Well, it's great as there are no injuries. However, truly as expected of a dungeon, for an Ogre of this size to appear.」

Rei gave a puzzled look at Elena's words.

He didn't know what their average size as it was the first time he had ever met an Ogre.

「Is it that big?」

「Ah. It's one size larger than the ones I've seen before.....no, it's more than two sizes larger.」

「In that case, do you mean it's a rare species?」

「No, it looks to be an ordinary Ogre. I guess it simply just grew bigger than the others, Look, the blood has stopped flowing. Store it quickly. Because we have to search the fourth floor for the stairs to the fifth floor, let's eat breakfast and resume the search. I think today will be a busy day as well so I'm counting on you again.」

It probably hadn't been 20 minutes since Elena had woken up, she didn't show any signs of bed hair or sleepiness as she smiled and tapped Rei's shoulder.

It was a pleasant appearance, and although it wasn't something that would come from a duke's daughter, it was acceptable coming from the General Princess.

「Rei, as Elena-sama said, most of the blood has flowed out, it would be better to store it soon? If they smell the blood, other monsters might come.」

「That's right, after storing it, we will get breakfast then continue with the search for the stairs.」

While nodding at Rei's words, Rei stored the right arm, head and body of the Ogre into the Misty Ring.

After the over 5m tall corpse disappeared plainly into the Misty Ring, everyone suddenly felt that the surrounding area had grown wider.

「Let's go back to the camp. It's a bit early, but as Rei said, we'll have breakfast.」

Nodding at Elena's words, they left the place and started walking back to the camp.

「Ah, it's still burning. Lucky.」

When they reached the camp, Vel said that as he threw a piece of firewood into the campfire.

After watching the campfire come back to life, Elena turned to look at Rei.

「Rei, we would like breakfast.」

「Yes.」

Nodding, Rei took out some bread, similar to hotdog buns, as well as a huge pot that held stew they had eaten yesterday.

「Gururu~」

Probably attracted by the smell, Set came over and rubbed his head against Rei while giving a cry.

「Ah, I understand. I will prepare yours separately, no need to worry.」

Rei took out the chunks of Orc meat from the Misty Ring that Elk, from Axe of the Thunder God, had cut up into bite sized pieces. He stuck them onto several branches so they wouldn't fall off before roasting them on the campfire.

It should be noted that bite sized piece meant bite sized pieces for Set, for someone like Rei, it was a considerable chunk.

「In that case, apologies Set, but we'll be starting first.」

After Elena said that, she started eating the simple bread and stew.....no, considering they were in a dungeon, it was a luxurious breakfast.

Rei took some bread and stew as well as some sauce from the Misty Ring. He then covered the roasted Orc meat skewers with the sauce before roasting them again, then placing them on a large leaf.

「Gururu~!」

Set couldn't wait and immediately bit into the meat as he was given it.

The fragrant smell of the roasted sauce spread to the surroundings, irresistibly increasing Rei's appetite.

Glancing for a moment, Ara saw the meat Set was eating and couldn't bear it any longer. She spoke up to Rei.

「R-Rei-dono. If it's okay with you I also want to try the meat.....」

「Ara too? Then can I ask for some as well?」

「Hmm. In that case, me as well.」

Not just Ara, as Vel and Elena also asked him, as expected he couldn't say no.....rather, Rei cut the Orc meat into a size that humans could eat and pierced them onto a tree branch before covering them in sauce and roasting them on the campfire.

「Uoh~, it smells good. It's a type of food you can never eat at home.」

「This isn't a fine enough dish that can be placed on a noble's table.」

Smiling wryly at Vel's words, he gave the bite sized meat skewers to each of them.

「Kuust, how about you? I don't mind sharing if you want some.」

Taking an appetite whetting skewer in his hand, Rei glanced at Kuust.

「I don't want any.」

But Kuust declined it with a few words, forcibly stuffed the remaining half of his bread into his mouth, swallowing it down with stew, before going to the opening in the tree where their luggage was placed.

「Really.....sorry Rei. You've had a lot of trouble.」

To Elena, who apologised while eating the Orc meat with great relish, Rei shook his head.

「I'm already used to it. However, I'm a little surprised that Elena-sama is eating the Orc meat without any complaints.」

「Ah, that is true. Normally, Kuust would say things about being more like a

duke's daughter.」

「I understand what Vel is trying to say, but remember the things that have happened up to now. In the battlefield, I also ate monster meat when there was a food supply shortage.」

It was Ara and not Vel who nodded at those words. Rei also nodded while tasting the Orc meat skewers.

「That's right. There was a case where the supply corps was attacked by the Bestir Empire.However, what I ate at that time wasn't as delicious as this Orc meat.」

「It's because monster meat that contains magic power will be more delicious. If it tasted worse than the meat of a D rank Orc it was probably the meat of a lower rank monster.Well, even low rank monsters have delicious meat like the leg meat of the Poison Toad.」

「It's as Rei said. If I'm not mistaken, the meat I ate at that time was the meat of either F or G rank monsters.」

While talking like that, the Orc skewers soon disappeared. In the first place, he only made enough to be like a sample so there wasn't a large amount.

Next to them, Set finished his second chunk of meat and gave a content cry.

Satisfying their hunger, the warm and comfortable atmosphere spread to the surroundings. Taking a pot out of the Misty Ring, Rei boiled some water to make some simple tea after their meal.

「.....Now then. Since we've finished eating, we should start today's search. If possible, I would like to go down to the fifth floor today.」

「According to the adventurers we met on the previous floor, there are undead on the fifth floor.」

「Normally, we wouldn't have anyone who could use fire magic, which is strong against the undead. But now we have you.」

Rei nodded while smiling wryly at Elena's words.

「Our party's weak point is that we can't use fire magic although I can use magic to some extent.」

「Vel?Ah, when you mention it, certainly at the lord's residence.....」

TLN: Maybe I'm too tired, but I cannot remember when Vel ever used magic...

At Rei's words, Vel gave a wry smile as he drank some brewed tea from his cup.

「Well, although I can use magic, it's truly basic. I learned it because it was necessary for my work behind the scenes of the party. Basically I can use it to feel out traps when disarming them.」

「You can use magic so don't mind it. I feel slightly depressed that I'm the only one in the party that can't use magic.」

Ara said that in dissatisfaction while drinking her tea.

「.....Rei-dono, to be honest, this tea isn't good enough.」

To rephrase that, it seemed that Ara wasn't unsatisfied at the taste of the tea.

As Ara had the role of Elena's maid, she was probably unhappy at how Rei ignored all the procedures when brewing tea.

But as Elena was used to eating and drinking on the battlefield, she drank the tea without any particular complaints.

「The Water Monkeys that attacked us yesterday might be a problem. I hoped that they had given up after yesterday.....」

Elena turned to look a short distance away.

She looked at the place where the small mountain of corpses of the monsters they had killed during the night was.

Most of them were Goblins, lizards and Giant Bats. However, Soldier Ants, Horned Rabbits and several Water Monkeys were also mixed in.

「The monsters that attacked in the night were probably scouts or something. I also killed one that was hiding in ambush.....」

「It is as Ara said. We should consider that the troop hasn't given up on us. There's also a chance that the scouts we killed at night was looking for an opening to attack us.」

「The boss that was leading that troop was quite big for a Water Monkey. It might be a rare species or something.」

Nodding at Vel's words, Elena drank the last of her tea.

「Right, let's get ready to leave. The person who washes the dishes should watch out for monsters near the water.」

Following Elena's instructions, everyone made their preparations for the search as the second day in the dungeon began.

Chapter 83

「.....They've come.」

It was about two hours after they had finished breakfast and left when Rei muttered involuntarily.

He was sure as Set was watching the surroundings and had been giving cries every now and then.

「Rei-dono, what's come?」

Asked that single line, Rei responded after looking at the trees around them.

「It could be the troop of Water Monkeys we fought yesterday. As far as Set can see, they've surrounded the area around us.....」

「But isn't that what they did yesterday? I didn't think that a group of monsters led by a rare species would use the same method after failing before.」

「Elena-sama, I think you're overestimating monster rare species too much.」

Kuust responded at Elena's doubtful question.

While watching the situation, Rei thought about it in his head while holding the handle of the Death Scythe to be ready if they were attacked by the troop of Water Monkeys.

(Certainly, what Kuust said isn't wrong. However, that's in the case where a rare species isn't leading. Although I only saw it for a few seconds yesterday, that rare species was highly intelligent without a doubt. That means.....)

「It could possibly be a trap, or something like that.」

「A trap? Monsters setting one up?」

Kuust turned to Rei, who was walking behind him, with a cranky look. However, Rei had already worked with him for several days and had gotten used to handling Kuust. Rei didn't mind him and continued explaining to Elena.

「By taking the same action as they did yesterday, we can handle them..... what if the purpose was to make us think that?」

「I see, it is to make us lower our guards. In that way they can make an

unexpected move.」

「Yes. So if you consider that, it's better to remain cautious.If they're not hiding among the trees, we have plenty of ways to attack and restrain them. Because here is the monster's turf, we can't afford to let them take advantage of the terrain.」

「Hm? Are there any means of long range attacks other than magic?」

To Elena, who turned and looked at him interestingly, Rei took out a single spear from the Misty Ring.

It was just a spear, it wasn't a magic item like the magic spear Kuust used. Nor was it a high quality weapon. It was really ordinary, the same as the spears the city guards used.

In fact, it was Rei's share of the spoils from the defeated bandits during the rank up test.

「What are you going to do with that spear? Are you praising me sarcastically?」

「I didn't intend to do that. Simply speaking.....」

Answering Kuust, Rei propped the Death Scythe against a tree and turning to direction where he thought a Water Monkey was.....hurled the spear at it!

Though the spear was thrown with just Rei's physical strength, as expected of his inhuman strength, it wasn't an ordinary spear throw. It disappeared from their sight, then after a few seconds, dogon~! A dull sound echoed into the surroundings.

「.....It missed.」

「Uwa~, what was that speed. I mean, if you can do that, why bother using magic?」

Vel murmured in shock, but Rei shook his head in silence.

「For a start, this is basically throwing it away. Even though I have a decent number of spears left, I still don't have a lot at hand. As it is a one off attack, I don't know if I can even retrieve it. Using magic, which only consumes magic power, has a overwhelmingly better cost performance ratio. Any how, magic power will naturally recover.」

「Huh, I see. It's like that.」

Vel gave a sigh of amazement at Rei's words.

「And unlike magic, I can't strengthen it with magic power. As a result, the attack ended up as you saw.」

Rei judged that the dull sound earlier was probably from hitting a tree trunk. Even if it had hit a Water Monkey, it probably wouldn't have left a deep wound.

「Ah, I see. I roughly understand. It's usability is certainly bad if you think about it.」

「Treat it as something that can be used occasionally.Now then, sorry for talking for so long. Let's go back to looking for the stairs」

「Ok, ok.」

Vel nodded and they kept moving forward as they searched for the stairs to the fifth floor.

「However, it's strange.」

Vel muttered as he tore the ivy that blocked their path with his dagger.

「What's strange?」

Ara asked while cutting tree branches that protruded out with her sword in the same manner.

「Look, isn't it strange that it's been two hours since we left last night's camp, yet not a single monster has appeared? It would be different if it was an ordinary forest, but we're in a dungeon.」

「Mm, was the Ogre that Rei defeated the boss of this area?」

「Idiot. Have you forgotten the events on the upper floors? For some reason, different types of monsters will cooperate in the dungeon.」

「.....But then, what did that Ogre eat to live? It couldn't have just eaten nuts in the forest.」

「.....」

Ara's point was unexpected. Surprise appeared on Vel's face as his hand that was cutting the ivy stopped.

No one could answer Ara's question. If you considered the monsters to be in a

cooperative relationship, it couldn't eat other monsters. Omnivorous monsters could eat plants, but what would a carnivorous monster like the Ogre eat?

「Well, thinking about it normally, there could be ordinary animals which aren't monsters in the dungeon.」

「That is certainly a possibility.」

As Elena nodded in understanding, she took out her sword whip from her sheath. At the same time, Kuust readied his magic spear and Rei his Death Scythe in silence.

「Gururururururu~!」

Set also gave a cry, wary of the surroundings. And.....

『Kikikikiki~!』

All the Water Monkeys that had been hanging around the trees simultaneously attacked from all sides while giving a resounding cry into the surroundings.

「This, as I thought, this was caused by the attack from before!」

A Water Monkey that bared its fangs as it leaped through the air was cut down by the Death Scythe in a single strike. Cutting it in two, Rei hit another one on the head with handle at the same time, blowing it away. Rei's eyes followed the Water Monkey for a moment as it hit the ground, scattering the contents in its head everywhere, before quickly turning around. The next moment, a Water Ball flew from the trees, passing the place his body had been a moment ago.

「Damn, they're targeting me intensely!」

「It seems to be so. I guess its because of the spear Rei threw earlier.....-!」

When Elena swung her sword whip, it extended into its whip form and drew a complex trajectory as it went towards the Water Monkeys, ripping several throats.

Nearby, Set jumped against the trees, blowing away Water Monkeys with his beak, forefeet and hind legs.

「You lowly monsters, know your place as my enemy!」

Kuust continuously thrust out his magic spear, piercing straight through the defensive layer of water covering the Water Monkeys fur without the water being able to display its defensive properties.

「Persistent from yesterday, aren't you! Ara, go!」

「I understand. I won't let you interfere with Elena-sama!」

Although the arrows that Vel shot lost most of their power due to the water covering the Water Monkeys and didn't pierce them, the impact was enough to bring them to the ground. Ara then smashed their heads with a single strike, splitting the body apart as if the water wasn't there.....no, more like cutting through with brute force.

The battle was overwhelming placed in an advantageous position by Rei. The Water Monkeys that leaped forward were slain, spraying their blood into the surroundings. However, 20 minutes, then 30 minutes later, this war of attrition turned it into a different story. Aside from Rei, who has an inhuman physical ability, though they were skilled knights, the other 4 were only ordinary people. As they continued to fight with all their strength for 30 minutes, not missing a moment, as expected, they reached their physical limits. No matter how skilled they were, they were still individuals. There weren't enough people to the extent that they could fight off a force so numerous.

「Haah!Eh? Kyaa~!」

Ara was the first to have her movements dull. Kuust and Elena used a magic spear and sword whip which had a longer reach. Compared to Vel, who was using the ranged bow, Ara had to directly approach the enemy and swing down with her sword, which consumed her physical strength much faster than the others. At the same time, in order to break through the Water Monkeys' defenses, she had to constantly use her great strength.

「Ara!」

The sword that was swung down was blocked by the water and the Water Monkey hit back in revenge only to have Kuust stab his magic spear into it. Kicking against the ground with great force, Kuust had thrust out his spear from the side. The magic spear pierced through the water covering the fur effortlessly, killing the Water Monkey.

「Haa, haa, thank you, Kuust.」

「No worries, just hold on a little longer! Even with monsters, their number isn't infinite. They should be stopping soon!」

「I, I understand.....ha!」

The attack that was filled with fighting spirit forcefully cleaved the water covering the fur of the Water Monkey left and right.

「Ah!」

However, the attack was too forceful. Hitting the bones of the Water Monkey, Ara's sword splendidly broke mid blade.

Not overlooking this chance, the Water Monkeys attacked again. Though they had intensively attack Rei at the beginning, they attacked Ara as if they had forgotten about him.....

「Flying Slash!」

The Flying Slash, Rei's Death Scythe's skill, cut down several Water Monkeys.

「Kikiki~!」

Glaring at Rei hatefully, there was still a Water Monkey that tried to attack the still weaponless Ara. However, there was a figure who moved faster.

「I won't let you get to my teammates!」

Elena's sword whip in its whip form drew a complex path as if dancing, after the blades passed through, several Water Monkeys fell to the ground with their throats torn, bleeding out.

Glancing aside, Rei took out the long sword that he had taken from the rank D party, Claws of the Hawk, out of the Misty Ring and threw it.

The sword thrown with Rei's strength pierced the face of the Water Monkey that was trying to attack Ara, stopping it.

「Ara, it's a cheap sword but it's better than a broken one. Use it!」

「Sorry about this, Rei-dono!」

She quickly pulled out the sword from head of the dead Water Monkey that had collapsed on the ground.

Although some Water Monkeys tried to attack in that gap, they were interrupted by Vel's arrows and Ara was able to safely regain her posture.

「Tch, persistent!」

3 Water Monkeys attacked along with 2 Water Balls. Twisting his body to avoid the first Water Ball, Rei cut the the Water Ball along with the head of a Water Monkey with the blade of the Death Scythe. The Water Monkey fell with the Water Ball, splashing blood onto the ground. Moving as if not feeling the weight, actually Rei didn't feel most of the Death Scythe's weight, he swung the blade back. The body of the Water Monkey that attacked him from behind was split into top and bottom.

「Gyi~!」

As the Death Scythe could conduct magic power, not just the blade, even the handle became an extremely vicious weapon.

The Water Monkey that had it's throat stabbed through by the handle instantly lost its life as it raised a scream. It was literally skewered.....

「Haah!」

With a single swing of the Death Scythe, the corpse hit another Water Monkey which had seen a gap and tried to strike Elena. Both were blown away.

「Sorry, Rei! Fuu~.....」

Elena was finally able to breathe after Rei's attack and fixed her breath.

(Is Elena already out of breath? Well, we've been continuously fighting without a break for almost an hour, so that is to be expected. If you think about it, Elena should be praised considering her breathing is only slightly rough)

The Water Monkeys attacked him once again. Rei glanced around for a moment as he tore through its water covered torso.

Ara was close to the limits of her physical strength, she was in a state where out of breath, she used her mental strength to keep her sword swinging. Kuust, who was swinging his spear next to her, was also beginning to run out of breath. Even Vel, who was shooting arrows from behind the 2, was showing obvious signs of consuming up his physical strength.

There was still room to spare in terms of physical fitness for Rei and Set. However, Elena and the others were only barely holding on in the war of attrition against the Water Monkeys.

Chapter 84

「Elena-sama, isn't it better to withdraw at once!？」

Jumping from the top of a tree, Vel shouted while shooting an arrow at a Water Monkey that was trying to attack Ara.

In the forest, they had already fought in this special battlefield for more than an hour since the Water Monkeys attacked. As they continued to fight without time for rest, Ara and Kuust's physical strength was reaching their limits. Ara's condition was particularly bad, it had already reached a situation where she was only holding on with will power. Vel continued to shoot arrows to follow up to help, as a result, Kuust's cover became insufficient, increasing his fatigue and leading into a vicious cycle. If Elena hadn't supported them with her sword whip and wind magic, the front would have collapsed long ago.

Hearing Vel's words, Elena turned to look at the direction they had come from for an instant. There were certainly fewer enemies there and seemed easy to break through.Yes, it was as if to say, 'you should escape here'.

To Elena, who had crossed numerous battlefields, no matter how she looked at it, the only escape looked to be a trap.

「It's useless! If you think about it, traps should have been set up there.」
「But if continue fighting here as it is, we will only be pulverized!」

It was a shout like a scream. Because she had been supporting Ara and Kuust from behind, she understood the best that both of them were close to their limits.

(Certainly, dragging on this war of attrition will only wear down our strength. It's useless unless we can make a big move here.)

Even while she thought of that, a Water Monkey attacked Elena.

「Eyy, persistent!」

Switching her sword whip back into sword form, she tore through a water ball and cut down down the Water Monkey that had come close at the same time.

Swinging the sword again like flowing water without pause, she lengthened the sword back into a whip, tearing at a Water Monkey.

However, only several Water Monkeys had their throat cut and fatally wounded, most of the others only had shallow wounds on their hands and feet.

「Haa-!」

While Elena and the others were struggling in a war of attrition against the Water Monkeys, Rei was also in the same situation.....no, he was being attacked by more Water Monkey than Elena and the others.

Scattering water balls, the blade of the Death Scythe plowed through several Water Monkeys as they leaped at him, baring their fangs and claws while the handle swung round, ignoring the water covering them, crushing their ribs.

『Fire, turn to stone and pierce!』

While avoiding the water balls as if dancing, he watched his enemies and cast spell while swinging the Death Scythe. As expected, because he was fighting in close combat against the Water Monkeys while dodging water balls shot from within the forest, it was not possible for him to cast a long incantation. As length of the incantation was related to the amount of magic power that could be transferred, a short incantation naturally resulted in a low power spell.

『Fire Gravel!』

A ball of flame about 50cm in diameter appeared at the blade of the Death Scythe as he swung it. After flying several meters, it burst into small balls of fire, 1cm in diameter, and scattered into the surroundings.

『Kikiki~!?』

Suddenly, a large quantity of flames appeared before their eyes, burning the places not covered with water. The Water Monkeys screamed as they immediately took some distance. Seeing that, Rei was finally given enough time to use his magic power to cast another spell.

『Fire, become a barrier to hurt those who seek to harm us. Create a wall of flames to separate us from our enemies.』

Rei pierced the handle of the Death Scythe into the ground while saying his

incantation. At the same time, a flame several centimeters tall ran across the ground, drawing a complex pattern around the ground that the handle had be pierced into.

「Rei, what is that!?!」

With Rei as the center, the flame went through an area that included Elena and the others as it drew a large circle. And the moment the circle was completed, Rei activated his magic.

『Crimson Flame Wall』

The moment he invoked the magic, a sound like a roar was heard! While creating that sound, when Rei invoked his magic, 8m tall walls of flame flared up around the magic formation.

「Guru~?」

Stroking Set, who had came over and rubbed his head anxiously, Rei turned to look at the surroundings.

The Water Monkeys were no longer around Rei as they had been surprised at the sudden attack of the fire gravel and retreated. At the same time, there were not many enemies fighting against Elena's group, only several who were still fighting Ara after they had been left inside the wall of flame.

The remaining Water Monkeys dropped their guards in surprise after suddenly being surrounded by the wall of flame. Ara and Kuust used all their remaining strength to attack one last time and Elena's sword whip extended out, taking the lives of the Water Monkeys.

「Rei, is this magic your work? Explain what it's effect is.」

She saw that all the Water Monkeys she could see had been defeated for now. Glancing to the side at Kuust and Ara who had fallen to the ground and were regaining their breath, Elena asked Rei.

While nodding at the question, Rei first took out water bottles from the Misty Ring and passed one to everyone.

As expected, knowing his own circumstances, Kuust, who would usually reject Rei, silently received a water bottle while breathing roughly.

「Elena-sama, here. We'll be safe for the next 30 minutes or so.」

「I see, I'll trust in Rei's magic.」

Elena took the water bottle and rested her breath.

Although Rei watched the movements of her glossy white throat as she drank the water, when Set used his beak to pull at Rei's Dragon Robe, he gathered himself and took a drink as well. At the same time, he took out some juicy fruits from the Misty Ring and gave them to Set.

「I'm revived.....now then, I would like an explanation.」

「What I used is a magic called Crimson Flame Barrier. It's effect is to form a barrier of flames around me. This is a slightly different one.....」

Saying so, Rei turned to look at the barrier.

There were a few Water Monkeys that were shooting water balls at part of it and the reaction was strong. The moment the water balls came in contact with the flame barrier, fire balls the same size as the water balls were shot out from the flame barrier, instantly burning up the Water Monkeys that had fired the water balls at it.

「As you can see, if you attack the flame barrier, it will retaliate. Because of that, as the flame barrier will hold out for about 30 minutes, we should be able to recover our physical strength in peace.」

「.....It's quite an advanced magic. However, this is a great help.」

Although it was hard to understand, Elena nodded as it was a fact that it had saved them. Because he had been using a bow, Vel, who hadn't exhausted as much of his strength as Kuust and Ara, spoke up.

「Hey, Rei. Is this a barrier of fire?」

「I think you will understand if you take a look.」

「Ah, well. But, since we're inside a barrier of fire, why don't we feel the heat?」

「An image is needed when using a spell. Although it is a barrier made of fire, the inside has been adjusted to have no change in temperature. Conversely, outside the flame barrier should be quite hot, enough that the water covering the Water Monkeys can't withstand it.」

「Uwa~, such a thing is possible.」

「It's very convenient. For the time being, spend the next 10 minutes focusing

on restoring your physical strength, then let's think about how to deal with them.」

Nodding at Elena's words, they all sat on the ground to recover their strength.

Though Rei still had strength to spare, he was still worn out. Leaning against Set, who had plopped himself on the ground, he concentrated on recovering his strength for 10 minutes.

(The number of Water Monkeys was a bit unexpected. There were about 20 of them that attacked yesterday, but there were at least 100 or more today. Naturally, I think they're led by a rare species.....in the case of the earlier attack. I think it will attack after we are more exhausted. Another possibility is the spear I threw.....is it?)

「Sorry, Elena-sama. I showed you an unsightly scene. To fall behind against the likes of these monsters.....」

「I was the same.」

Rei, who had closed his eyes, heard the voices of Kuust and Ara.

Indeed, as expected of knights, they were able to recover their breath in this short period of time. Eventually, one of them came towards Rei.

「Rei-dono, as it is, may I use this sword?」

While Rei opened his eyes at that question, naturally, considering the voice who asked, he saw Ara.

(No, if it was Kuust that came over, it would be a troublesome thing.)

Maybe because he was a little tired, he nodded while thinking.....he turned his eyes to the sword Ara was holding before frowning his eyes involuntarily.

When he had thrown it to her during the battle, it was in brand new condition.....not like now, where though it was still sufficient for practical use, the sword was already slightly bent.

「I don't mind.....but the sword is almost reaching its limits, is that okay?」

「.....To be honest, it's not okay. But, because my sword is like that.」

Ara glanced away for an instant, there was a sword that was broken mid blade.

「.....Rei, if it's fine with you, are there any better weapons? Ones that Ara can use.」

Unable to remain indifferent to Ara, who had subtly dropped her shoulders, or maybe just to increase their strength, Elena came over and asked Rei.

「I certainly understand Ara's power as a vanguard is wanted, unfortunately, the only sword I had is the one she has now.」

In the first place, Rei had his Death Scythe, he didn't need any other main weapon. The Death Scythe was made with Rei's own magic power and was very sturdy, after empowering it with magic, there was almost no possibility of damaging it. Because of that, the only other weapons Rei used was a knife or dagger for dismantling and the throwing spear that seemed to have caused this fight. The main reason for the expensiveness of magic items was because of its scarcity.

(No, wait?)

At that moment, a thought went through Rei's head. Ara, strength, magic item, the four members of Claws of the Hawk.

Yes, it certainly was a problem that there were no swords that Ara could use. However, he had a weapon that was appropriate for her if you only considered her strength.

He displayed the Misty Ring's inventory in his mind and selected the one labeled Power Axe.

It was one of the items he had won from the bet with Vargas, the leader of the D rank party that had messed with Rei, Claws of the Hawk. He had heard afterwards that it was a magic item that had been obtained from exploring the dungeon here.

(This is a magic item that I'd obtained, since she's lost her weapon, I could lend it to her for a while.)

The next moment, a huge battle axe appeared in Rei's hands.

「Ara, would you like to use this?」

「What is this?」

「Power Axe. Well, it's a magic item battle axe」

「.....Hmm, I can certainly feel the magic power. So what is its effect?」

TLN: And this is why Rei fought the Claws of the Hawk...probably

Although Elena asked that question as she looked with interest at the Power Axe, Rei shook his head.

「Unfortunately, as it was a magic item I just collected, I also don't know the details of its effects. However, I can roughly imagine from the name Power Axe.」

「I wonder.Ara, what do you want to do? Do you think you can use Rei's axe?」

「.....Rei-dono, could you lend it to me for a bit?」

「Ahh, I don't mind.」

Rei passed the Power Axe to Ara, who held out her hands nervously.

「Kya~!」

Feeling the unexpected weight after being passed the battle axe, Ara took it with a small cry, surprising given her immense strength.

「This is, a magic item.」

While muttering, she gripped the Power Axe with one hand.....lifted it up, and swung it down.

「Hou~.」

Rei unconsciously gave a sigh of admiration.

「What's the matter?」

Elena asked Rei as she watched Ara swing the Power Axe as if it was part of her body.

「Nothing. The Power Axe was won as a prize from a bet, but the previous owner wielded it with two hands. I didn't think she could easily swing it with one hand.」

Meanwhile, Ara repeatedly swung the Power Axe up and down slowly as if to accustom her body to it.

「Ara! I know you want to adapt your body to your new weapon, but don't forget that our time to recover is limited. Save your strength.」

「Ah, I understand, Elena-sama!」

At Elena's words, Ara approached Rei while comfortably holding the Power Axe in one hand.

「Rei-dono, please let me use this magic item. It feels familiar to me as if I've used it for many years.」

「No Problem. If Ara's power can't be used, I would be troubled.So then, Elena-sama. What next.」

「Umu~. To start, retreating the direction we came from is rejected. Even if there are clearly less enemies, they obviously want to drive us there.」

「But Elena-sama, Do monsters have such intelligence?」

「Kuust, you also saw it. Their intelligence is high enough to use a war of attrition to wear us down. In that case, don't you think it's enough to set up a trap?」

「.....There is a possibility, I will only say that.」

「In that case, what's left left is to break through at a point other than the trap. I would like to defeat the rare species if possible.....」

「If you think about it normally, the rare species would usually be behind the place where the enemies' forces are strongest.....in the first place though, it's a monster. Will they work according to these expectations.」

Vel who seemed to have finally recovered, butted in with his light tone.

「I wonder. In the first place, number of means of attack is limited if you're on a tree. If that's the case, then it's best to break through the direction we were heading in and get out of their siege.」

「If it comes to that, the problem is how to deal with the Water Monkeys that chase us. I won't be happy to have them chase us endlessly.」

At Vel's mutterings, everyone nodded.

Meanwhile, Set gave a cry and pulled Rei's Dragon Robe as if asking for something.

「Gurururu~」

Rei knew what Set wanted to say. Set could acquire skills by absorbing magic

stones. The skills could have a wide range of effects such as 『King's Awe』 which didn't do any direct damage, unlike Rei's fire magic.

It's effect could reduce the speed of lower ranked monsters by 10% due to the sense of intimidation Set would give off. It would certainly be an effective attack against the Water Monkeys who would pursue them with their quick speed. In addition, as it was expected that the effect would show on all monsters with a rank below Set's, it might even affect the rare species that was leading the Water Monkeys.

「Rei, what is it? What is Set trying to say?」

While listening to Elena's question, Rei was conflicted in his mind.

(What should I do? Normally, a Griffon is a rare A rank monster. Would it be fine for me to tell them he can use skills an ordinary Griffon can't? No, if it was just Elena, there would be no problem. If I just said I wanted to keep it a secret, I could expect her to keep it. And if Elena' told her to do so, Ara would keep the secret until her death. However, Kuust despises me and Vel is talkative. These two.....no, I can manage somehow if Elena takes responsibility for them..... maybe. Besides, there's always the choice to use 『Seed of Contract』 to get out of this dilemma. Some of them will hate it, but if it comes to dying or receiving it, they will probably take it.)

Concluding his inner conflict, he spoke up as he felt that effects of the flame barrier would expire soon.

Chapter 85

「I'll do something about the enemies pursuit. In addition, I have an idea that might be able to do something to the rare species.」

The moment Rei said that, everyone, including Elena, turned to look at Rei.

「.....Hou~, what is it?」

「Before that. This is the same as revealing my secret skills. If I don't use it here, we would be in danger, so I have no choice but to use it. But I have one condition.」

「You can say it.」

「I have a magic called 『Seed of Contract』. When I use it, I can set conditions. For example, in this case, if you break it and tell other people about it, the magic will activate and your body will burn up. I will use my secret skills if you accept this.」

The moment Rei said that, the top of Kuust's magic spear appeared right next to his face.

「.....You, do you not know when to stop pushing your luck? Are you, a commoner, trying to bind nobles like me and Elena with your magic? Know your place!」

As that angry voice echoed into the surroundings, Kuust's blood thirst began to spread. However, Rei spoke as if it had never happened.

「Set.」

「Gurururururu~!」

One word. With one word from Rei, Set swung down his forefoot and slammed Kuust's magic spear into the ground.

「Guh!」

Even though Kuust was confident in his strength, as expected, he couldn't match the strength of a Griffon. Not to mention Set had equipped an item called Bracelet of Herculean Strength, amplifying his strength.

Because the magic spear he was holding in his hands was unceremoniously slammed into the ground, he gave a groan as his hands went numb.

Rei continued speaking while looking at Kuust coldly.

「If you absolutely don't want to accept this condition, that's fine. You can challenge the dungeon by yourself. I ride on Set and go back up.」

「Don't joke around! In the first place, you're an adventurer dispatched by Margrave Rowlocks to guard us! Do you think it's fine to abandon the people you're supposed to guard and flee!」

「Hmm, to despise someone so much until now, what now that the time has come. I guess it's just your typical noble with an inflated ego and not the ability to match it.」

「You-!」

Just as Kuust was trying to reach out for his magic spear with his numb hands, the moment he touched the magic spear, he noticed that the blade of the Death Scythe was against his neck.

「What's wrong? Aren't you going to pick up your spear? Aren't you proud of your spear?」

「Guh!」

It was an explosive situation. Even though Elena was watching, if Kuust tried to do something, it was obvious that the blade at his neck would kill him. Because of that, Vel spoke up without making any careless movements.

「Rei, could you move that away from Kuust? Even though it's Kuust, this is still going too far, I hope you won't kill him.」

While smiling bitterly at Vel's words, Rei moved the Death Scythe away from Kuust's neck.

Seeing that, Elena turned to speak to Rei as Vel gave a sigh of relief.

「Seed of Contract, the one you mentioned. Is it absolutely necessary?」

「That's right, because there will be many inconveniences for Set and me if my secret skills is leaked to other people. There are three choices I can give. The first is using the Seed of Contract, I will then use my secret skills to get us out of here. The second is if you refuse to use the Seed of Contract. I'm sorry, but in

this case I will have to part with Elena-sama and the rest. The third option is a compromise, I won't use my secret skills but we should be able to manage getting out of here. In this case, we will work together as much as possible but I will escape with Set if it becomes an emergency.」

「.....Give me a little time. By the way, how long before the fire barrier disappears?」

「It will last another 10 minutes or so.」

「.....Give me 5 minutes.」

Saying only that, Elena started to think as she closed her eyes.

While Rei was watching the situation, Vel called out from beside him.

「If you part with us as you said, do you know what will happen after Elena-sama dies in the remote territory of Margrave Rowlocks?」

「Ah. I guess I'll get various members of the Nobles Faction trying to kill me.」

「Did you give those three choices knowing that?」

「In the first place, the expectations on me are too great for a D rank adventurer. If you are really looking for escorts, don't demand that it be limited to D rank. You should have properly asked for A or B ranks. 」

「.....There were various circumstances regarding that. Kuust.....setting that aside, what do you think of our current situation Ara?」

Ara, who was holding the Power Axe in her hand, bluntly answered Vel's question.

「As for me, I will just follow Elena-sama's instructions. If Elena-sama decides to accept the 『Seed of Contract』 I will respect that. If she does not accept it, I will respect that. And.....」

She turned to look at Rei while swinging the large Power Axe.

「If Elena-sama orders me to kill Rei-dono, I will only accept it.」

「.....Tentatively, the axe is mine. Even if I told Ara she can use it, I've only lent it to her, but that doesn't mean I've given ownership to her.」

「That's right. This Power Axe is certainly Rei-dono's property. But since I've borrowed it now, aren't I free to use it as I wish?」

「Hmm, I see. So it's like that. Certainly if you consider the logic.....」

As Rei was about to speak further, Elena's eyes opened.

「Rei, I want to ask. If you use your secret skills, are you certain that you can get us out of this predicament?」

「I cannot say for sure. But I guarantee it will become much easier than before.」

「.....A compromise. I can't have you use Seed of Contract here. If there is such a magic on me when I reach the Altar of Inheritance, I don't know what kind of adverse effect it could have. Instead, if you can safely fulfill my purpose at the Altar of Inheritance, you can use the Seed of Contract before we leave the dungeon.」

Hearing Elena's words, Rei thought in his mind.

(As for adverse effects occurring at the Altar of Inheritance, perhaps it will cause some reaction in Elena. In that case, it certainly is also a bad time to plant the Seed of Contract now. In that case.....)

He glanced at Elena and the other three.

Guessing the meaning of that look, Elena spoke up again.

「I'm sorry but I can't let you use that magic on the other three. This is because all three of them also have something they have to do at the Altar of Inheritance.」

「.....So I just believe your words and use my secret skills, is it?」

「That is the case. However, if we can get out of here safely as you said, after completing what we need to do at the Altar of Inheritance, I swear by the name of family of Duke Kerebel that we will accept the Seed of Contract.」

「.....Duke, you say.」

Muttering, he glanced at Kuust, who was scowling at Rei with threatening eyes. From that attitude, Rei honestly didn't feel safe, even if the promise was made in a noble's name.

Elena followed Rei's line of sight and understood what he probably wanted to say. She spoke up again with a bitter smile.

「Okay then, I'll promise under the name of the General Princess. Will you accept that?」

「.....I understand. If it's a promise under Elena-sama's renowned title of the General Princess, I will believe it.」

「Umu~. Kuust, Vel, Ara. Do the three of you mind?」

To that question, Ara nodded without hesitation while Kuust and Vel nodded reluctantly.

「Well then, can you explain to us your secret skills? Also won't the effect of the flame barrier end soon?」

「That is so. Set!」

「Guru~」

Set gave a cry and came closer to Rei.

「The secret skills are in relation to Set. As you can see, Set looks like an ordinary Griffon. In fact, he is a kind of rare species and can do various things that other Griffon's can't do. For example.....Set, use Fire Breath at the flame barrier.」

「Gururururu~!」

At Rei's instruction, Set gave a loud cry, opened his beak and took a big breath.....the next moment, he spat out an unmistakable fire breath that hit a few Water Monkeys that were watching Rei and the others from the other side of the wall of fire. Although it couldn't kill them in a single hit because of the water covering their fur, it still seemed to hurt them quite a bit as they ran away from the flame barrier screaming.

Rei turned to Elena and the others, who were watching with stunned looks, and spoke again.

「As you can see, this is something an ordinary Griffon can't do. There are several others, but what he will use this time is a cry that will slow the speed of all enemies who hear it.」

「.....What? All the enemies, is it?」

「Yes. It can decrease it by about 10%. There are also some enemies who would be stunned due to the cry, but you shouldn't expect it to happen here.」

Set took that as a compliment from Rei and came over to rub his head against him.

Rei scratched Set's head while smiling like looking at a small child.

「For certain, a characteristic of the Water Monkeys is their nimbleness. If their speed can be slowed by 10% as Rei-dono said, it might not be difficult to

get through this place?」

「Yes, I agree with Vel. Kuust?」

「.....Hmph, do as you like.」

Kuust to Ara's words with a snort. However, for an instant, he cursed at Rei with his eyes.

「Well then, we will try to break through here with Set's ability. It is simple. Set will give a cry the moment the flame barrier disappears. We will break through the point where the enemies' speed has slowed.」

(A cry it is. Well, because they probably wouldn't believe it if I said it was King's Awe, I should just tell them it's a cry.)

「It is good to break through one point, will we head towards the same direction we were going to earlier?」

Elena nodded at Vel's words.

「Any how, we are in the middle of searching for the stairs to the fifth floor. There won't be any problems.」

While saying that, they turned their eyes to the flame barrier, which was gradually weakening.

「Well then, it won't be long. Everyone, check your equipment. It might be physically straining but we will break through at once.」

At that instruction, everyone checked their weapons. There were no problems with Rei, Elena and Kuust's weapons for now as they were all magic weapons. Because he used a bow, Vel was resupplied arrows for from the Misty and had no problems either. Lastly was Ara, who instead of holding a long sword like earlier, held the Power Axe with one hand.

After a few tense minutes.....the flame barrier abruptly disappeared. The Water Monkeys didn't miss the opportunity and attacked at the same time. And.....

「Set!」

At Rei's cue, Set used King's Awe and gave a loud cry.

「GURURURURURURURURURURURURURURURU~!」

The moment they heard his cry, the movements of the Water Monkeys clearly dulled. Rei and Elena weren't incompetent to miss this moment of opportunity.

「Let's go, break through one point! Only intercept attacking enemies!」

Ara and Kuust ran at the front. Ara countered the slowed attackers with the Power Axe. True to its name, whether it hit their head or body, or even their arms or legs, the Power Axe would send them flying. The path that Ara had passed through was littered with the limbs, heads and internal organs which had been torn from the Water Monkeys. Beside her, Kuust swung his magic spear, accurately stabbing the bodies of the Water Monkeys. The magic spear had the ability to manipulate water and was able to deal with the water that covered their fur. To the Water Monkeys who used attacks like Water Ball, it was their natural enemy.

Many water balls were shot at them from behind. Even if King's Awe was used, though it could slow the release of the water balls, the speed of the water balls were the same as before. As the middle guard, Vel and Elena intercepted them. Her sword extended and her sword turned into a whip, intercepting the water balls one by one, destroying them and scattering water onto the ground. The Water Monkeys who had shot the water balls had their movements dulled from Set's King's Awe and were shot by Vel's arrows.

Rei and Set, who were in the rearguard, probably had the easiest time. Because the Water Monkeys had become scared and frightened by Set's King's Awe, none of them attacked carelessly due to their fear. Still, some of them moved their slowed bodies to attack Rei, who was running next to Set, there weren't many though, just a few. The slowed enemies were cut down by Rei's Death Scythe and died.

「Elena-sama, we seem to be leaving the forest!」

Ara shouted from the front. When the party turned to look in that direction, they could certainly see a break in the forest at the very end.

「Right, we will cut through at once! We will have the advantage once we leave the forest.」

At Elena's instructions, they all quickly went through the forest.....and found a Water Monkey about 2m tall, as if waiting for them.

Chapter 86

Rei had finally gotten out of the forest thanks to Set's King's Awe. However, what lay before their eyes was the 2m tall Water Monkey rare species.

「.....Perhaps, we were lured here by them?」

With the Power Axe in hand, Ara muttered that in disbelief. However, Elena heard that and denied it while shaking her head.

「No, it's different. If it had really lured us here, it would have gathered a larger force.」

The rest of them counted the number of enemies as Elena said that.

As for enemies, the Water Monkey rare species was the most conspicuous. Around it were several Water Monkeys that were probably its aides, they were slightly over 1m tall. In addition, there were familiar monsters such as Fang Wolves, Poison Toads and Goblins. There was also a single Lizardman, equipped with a sword and shield. Their number was certainly few as Elena had said. All together, there were about 30 of them. And.....

「Look behind them. That's what we've been looking for.」

Turning their eyes to what was behind the monsters at Elena's words, the stairs to the fifth floor that Rei and the others had been looking for were right there.

「Our purpose is to go down the the fifth floor.....Rei, do you think the rare species will follow if we rush to the fifth floor?」

「Honestly, I have no idea. However, the trap that was placed at the end of the second floor was made with spider silk. Given we were immediately attacked by the giant spider after going down to the third floor, there's a high chance it will.」

「There's no other way, is it. They are also coming from behind.」

Elena turned to look at the forest they had just come out of. Behind them, they could see the troop of Water Monkeys from before among the trees. However, they seemed to be in a state where they couldn't move when Set

looked at them.

「Leave the enemies behind us to Set. Everyone else clean up the small fry and the rare species ahead. Go!」

Rei moved his eyebrows slightly at Elena's instruction. He gave an instruction to Set as went towards the group ahead.

「Set, please guard against the Water Monkeys in the forest!」
「Gururururu~!」

Set gave a cry full of fighting spirit. Rei thought as he followed behind Elena.

(Certainly with Set's power, the troop won't take a single step. However, to rely on Set for the back even though we had just threatened them a little while ago. Should I call them bold.....did they not think that I could abandon them and escape? No, did they leave the back to us after considering that possibility?)

Even as he thought that way, the distance between them and the monsters in front gradually narrowed.

The other party didn't want to let Rei make the first move and a Fang Wolf and Goblin jumped forward to meet them.

『Flame, burn the enemy according to my thoughts.』

Pouring magic power into his incantation, the Death Scythe produced a fireball. Rei shot it with a large swing.

『Fireball!』

The released fireball overtook Ara and Kuust, who were running at the front, and caused an explosion as it hit the center of the enemy's vanguard as they approached them.

The Goblin and Fang Wolf were turned to charcoal without being able to raise a sound. The group of monsters were sent into confusion as soon as they started and hesitated to move forward.

「Ara and Kuust, kill the monsters as you meet them. Vel, restrain the Water Monkeys that can use magic. Rei, flank and attack the enemies from the side!」

The instant the opening appeared, Elena issued instructions. Rei and the three others started to take action following the instructions they received.

Ara swung the Power Axe literally cleaving the remaining Fang Wolves in two. Kuust stabbed his magic spear into the body of a Goblin, killing it instantly. A Water Monkey that was ready to fire a water ball in an attempt to support its vanguard was interrupted by an arrow that Vel shot. While giving specific instructions to all of them, Elena held down the Lizardman as she swung her sword whip, heavily injuring it.

While admiring their cooperation that was done without the slightest error, Rei took a detour as he sneaked around where the fighting was going on.

Seeing their leader fighting, although they tried to move and attack Elena and the others from behind, when Set looked at them with his sharp eyes each time, they would freeze.

Although there was always a difference in monster ranking, it was thanks to King's Awe being used in this situation that the Water Monkeys weren't able to utilise the nimble movements they were good at. No, they were frozen in fear that they would be crushed by his claws without a doubt if they attacked.

While checking for an instant with his peripheral vision that the back was still in a stalemate, Rei finally finished his detour and broke into the enemy group at their flank. That said, the Fang Wolves, Goblins and the single Lizardman that had been fighting Elena has been taken out. The number of monsters on the side of the leading Water Monkey rare species had already decreased considerably. Aside from the rare species and the larger than ordinary Water Monkeys, only three Poison Toads hadn't been intercepted by Elena, due to the difference in movement speed.

Capturing all the monsters in his sight, he stopped where he was after confirming there was enough distance between them and started saying an incantation.

『Flame, pour down a rain of arrows and burn all. 』

As the incantation was said, arrows made of fire, about the length of his arm, formed around Rei. There were about 50 in number.

Maybe noticing that a large number of fire arrows had appeared, the rare species turned to look at Rei. At the same time, it may have noticed how powerful the magic that Rei was about to use was. In a hurry, it tried to give orders to its aides...but it was already too late.

『Fire Arrow Rain!』

When the magic was activated, as the Death Scythe was also a magic casting tool, more than 50 fire arrows headed in the direction that Rei swung the Death Scythe at.

「Kikikiki~!」

The Water Monkeys screamed. Rei tried to sweep away as many enemies with this.....he didn't think he could hurt the rare species with this. It would have been lucky to hit it with a single arrow. However, the rare species took an action that Rei did not expect.

「Kiki~!」

How? It grabbed a nearby Poison Toad and used it as a living shield to block the fire arrows that rained on it.

The surrounding Water Monkeys who saw that imitated their leader and used the Poison Toads near them as living shields.

Then the arrows landed. The fire arrows were shielded by the Poison Toads. They also pierced the Water Monkeys that had a late start and were unable to use their surroundings to shield themselves.

At the same time, a large amount of dust was blown into the surroundings by the shock of the fire arrows that had hit the ground instead of the enemies, covering the area around like a smokescreen.

「Shoes of Sleipnir, start!」

As soon as he activated the Shoes of Sleipnir, Rei took 1, 2, 3 steps as he ran into the air.

As he went through the dust cloud, several water balls flew out. They couldn't hit Rei, who was already in the air, and hit the ground instead, launching dirt into the surrounding area.

Running through the air, Rei went to 10m above the ground. As he watched the dust cloud gradually clear, the effect of the Shoes of Sleipnir ended and he started to fall.

A surprise attack from above. The fire arrows that he had shot earlier was all part of a strategic move for this single attack.

While falling to the ground, Rei looked for the figure of his target, the rare species. But because the dust cloud was unexpectedly big, the visibility wasn't good.

(Tch, it's impossible to tell apart the rare species.Then!)

Rei had already fallen to 5m above the ground. In this situation, after creating a surprise attack with much trouble, he poured magic power into the Death Scythe and swung it down at the first shadow that caught his eyes.

「Haah!」

「Kyī~!?」

Cutting through flesh and bone, he felt a sensation similar to cutting through bamboo.

「.....Tch.」

Seeing his target parted left and right while scattering its internal organs and blood onto the ground, he clicked his tongue.

After the dust cloud cleared up, Rei saw that he hadn't hit the rare species he was aiming for and had hit one of its aides instead.

A sound of something tearing through the air could be heard from behind. The moment he heard the sound, he reflexively went down to the ground.

「Kikiki~!」

Swinging the handle of the Death Scythe behind him as he crouched down, the next moment a dull sound of flesh and bone hitting metal echoed into the surroundings.

「Kyī~!」

Then what followed was the sound of something falling to the ground and a

scream as it was unable to bear the pain. Turning around, getting up from his crouching state on the ground and sweeping with the Death Scythe, he cut the neck of the Water Monkey which had fallen behind him.

At the same time, checking for an instant, he turned the big shadow that was visible to his right. Kicking up the head that he had just cut off, he kicked against the ground and followed the head as he readied his Death Scythe.

「Kikiyi~, kyi~!」

It was the biggest shadow he had seen so far. Normally, Water Monkeys should be smaller than Rei. The shadow of the Water Monkey was a head taller than Rei and was undoubtedly the rare species that was leading the Water Monkeys.

As the head of its aide came close, it brushed it aside with the corpse of the Poison Toad that had been hit by fire arrows just before. And as it approached close to Rei, it opened its mouth wide open.....

The moment he saw its mouth, Rei felt a chill up his spine and reflexively kicked against the ground and jumped to the side.

Almost at the same time as Rei jumped, a purple liquid was spat out of the mouth of the rare species.

「Kyi~!」

Seeing Rei avoid it narrowly, the rare species opened its mouth again while raising its voice in anger. Rei saw that and tried to jump away again, but.....

「Kikikikiyi~!」

The two remaining aides of the rare species sandwiched him as they attacked with their claws.

「Rei!」

A line of light swam through the air as Rei's name was called out. It was Elena, who had been using her sword whip to fight a group of monsters. With a sharp and quick blow, in an instant, it slashed the throat of a Water Monkey that had been attacking Rei. An arrow then hit the right foot of the other Water Monkey, stopping it's movements.

The moment he saw it, Rei fell back to evade the arm of the Water Monkey as it swung down and pushed it, moving its position. Then the purple liquid that was spat out from the mouth of the rare species flew past. With an arrow lodged in its right foot, the Water Monkey couldn't evade the liquid after having its balance knocked away by Rei.....and was hit in the face by the liquid. And the next moment.

「Kikikikikikikiky~!」

It screamed as it rolled on the ground. As it held its face, the parts of its face that could be seen through the gaps of its fingers looked like a candle that had melted under a flame. Rei was able to see half its skull clearly exposed.

「Tch, a corrosive liquid!」

Using the Death Scythe to cut the body of the Water Monkey that was rushing around madly, it stopped breathing, leaving only the rare species.

However, it scowled as Rei and Elena approached, ready to spit out the corrosive liquid at any time.

(.....What to do.)

It would be easy to defeat the remaining rare species before them. The corrosive liquid was certainly a threat, but it could only spit it in one direction. In other words, if everyone surrounded it, it would have no way out. However.....who would want the role of attacking the rare species first and dodging the corrosive liquid. When he thought about that, the right should of the rare species suddenly came into Rei's view.

Yes, the right shoulder had been cut sharply and was bleeding even though it was covered with water.

The moment Rei saw it, he understood why the Water Monkeys had suddenly attacked. It was the spear Rei had thrown in the forest. Maybe the spear had injured this rare species, which had caused it to start the attack in anger.

(If that's the case, then the story isn't too complicated.

Muttering in his mind, he called out to Elena, who was holding her sword whip.

「Elena-sama, from now, I will throw spears to attack that guy. I think that will make it direct its fierce hostility towards me, use that opening to attack. Since there is a possibility of it using that corrosive liquid if you approach, use medium or long distance attacks if possible.」

「.....I see. Certainly, the spear Rei threw at the beginning is what started the fight. All right, but watch out for the liquid it spits from its mouth.」

As for Elena, at Rei's words, she saw the injury on the right shoulder of the rare species and understood the general situation as she readied her sword whip.

「Kikikiyi, kyi,、kikikikikiyi~!」

The rare species tried to intimidate Rei when it saw him take a step forward. Rei meaningfully held the Death Scythe out in front of him with his hands.

「Kyi~?」

The rare species had a mystified expression, as Rei stored his Death Scythe into the Misty Ring right in front of it.

「Kikiyi~!?!」

Naturally, the rare species didn't know of the object called an item box and made some noise as it couldn't understand how the large scythe that was before his eyes had disappeared. But, it was still wary and ready to spit out the corrosive liquid at any time. However, the next moment, its wariness collapsed as anger dominated its mind. It was because a familiar spear had appeared in the hands of the diminutive person before it.

Yes, because it was a spear identical to the one that pierced through his right shoulder just before.

「Kikikikikiyi~!」

The moment it saw the owner of the spear, it instinctively spat out the corrosive liquid at the person in front of it.

「The moment I was waiting for!」

However, this action was within Rei's expectations. It wasn't difficult to avoid. And as if in prearranged fashion, Elena's sword whip extended into a whip.....

and the blade pierced through the head of the rare species.

Chapter 87

「Somehow it worked out.....it seems.」

Elena's voice sounded in the battlefield.

Before her eyes was the figure of the dead Water Monkey rare species, which had its head pierced through by the sword whip. Just several seconds ago, it had been leading a large troop of monsters.

Continuing to look at the surroundings, all the monsters led by the rare species that had attacked them were dead.

In addition, in the forest behind them, the Water Monkeys that were restrained by Set all scattered and disappeared into the forest after seeing their boss killed.

「Elena-sama, are you hurt anywhere!?!」

As she watched Ara come closer as she held the Power Axe, Elena gave a small nod.

「Umu~, there's no problem. That aside, are you okay? I've left the vanguard to you with an axe, a new weapon.....」

Elena asked Ara, who was smiling happily like a small child after finding out that Elena had no injuries. As far as she could see, Ara wasn't injured either, which gave her peace of mind.

「Yes. Although I was slightly injured, it's just a small scratch. It can be healed with Kuust's magic.」

「.....I see, I've put you through a lot of trouble as well Kuust.」

Elena followed Ara and spoke to Kuust as she walked over.

「No, healing is also my job.」

Although he had many disagreements with Rei regarding the Seed of Contract, as Elena has accepted it, Kuust didn't think it was his place to say anything.Yes. For Elena, that is.

Seeing Kuust glare at him with irritated looks as he approached, Rei involuntarily gave a sigh.

Seeing Kuust glare at him again, Rei guessed his intentions and spoke to Elena without minding it.

「Do you want to go down to the next floor right now? Or do you want to take a break here for a while?」

「.....That's right, considering we were immediately attacked by Lizardmen and a spider as soon as we went down the third floor, it would be better to take a short break here. Rei, can you ask Set to keep watch?」

「I understand.」

Rei nodded at Elena's words and walked towards Set, who was still wary of the forest.

While watching him go, Elena head hurt over Rei and Kuust's disagreements.

「Set, you've saved us this time. Here, eat this for now.」

「Gururu~」

Without noticing Elena racking her brains behind him, Rei talked to Set, who was guarding against the forest.

He held dried meat in his hand, which Set grabbed with his beak before eating it and gave a cry before lying on the ground.

Rei also sat on the ground and leaned against Set as he took a bottle of water from the Misty Ring to moisten his throat.

(Well then, Elena herself has accepted the 『Seed of Contract』. Ara is the same. Vel had the look that he would obey his boss, so there's no problem then in the end, it's still Kuust. Since he strongly opposed it, he might try to get rid of me in the midst of confusion. He's probably hoping that I forget about the 『Seed of Contract』. In that case, it would probably be better to watch my back in the near future.)

「Guru~?」

What's wrong? While Rei stroked Set's head as Set seemed to ask, he heard someones footsteps approaching.

Because of what he had been thinking of earlier, he almost reached out his hand to grab the Death Scythe on reflex.....but stopped his hand after realising who it was.

「Rei. I'm planning to leave soon. Could you collect the monsters we killed first?」

Yes, it was Elena who had come over.

To Elena, who had a wry smile, Rei returned a wry smile as well.

「I understand. According to the information I heard from the adventurers yesterday, it seems that there are a lot of undead on the fifth floor. But with our current party it might be a little tough.....」

「That is so, it would be tough by ourselves. However, fortunately for us, as I said during breakfast, Rei is good with fire magic and as I saw earlier, Set can use Fire Breath. That alone is enough for us.」

Because most people regard fire as a weak point for the undead, Elena and the others would have had a hard time fighting them. In that sense, Elena felt that it was fortunate that Rei had been dispatched to the party.

While listening to Elena's words, Rei stood up with the Death Scythe in hand. As he went to go collect the monster corpses as instructed.....he stopped and turned to Elena.

「Elena-sama. The matter about the 『Seed of Contract』, don't forget about it.」

At those unexpected words, she gave an interesting smile as she nodded.

「Of course. I always keep the promises made under my name. Or what? Do you think will break my promise under the name of the General Princess?」

「No, I don't think Elena-sama will break it. But what about those that didn't promise?」

She understood who Rei was talking about. The smile that was on her face a few seconds ago disappeared as she spoke.

「I understand. Honestly, even I didn't think Kuust would be that stubborn. His affinity is bad, should I say. Normally, he would tend to take an arrogant

attitude when facing people who are not nobles, but in this case, it seems to be much worse.」

「I don't know the details but please understand that I don't plan to quietly ignore it if the other party forgets about the 『Seed of Contract』.」

「That's fine. I agreed in my name to accept the 『Seed of Contract』, as a result we were able to escape the war of attrition. Even so, after a life threatening situation, I have no intention of doing such a vulgar thing of insisting that I didn't make such a promise. If Kuust really demands to find trouble with you over this, I don't mind if you kill him. No, in that case, I promise to take care of it with my own hands.」

Elena's eyes were serious as she said so.

Prouder than anyone, her eyes vividly showed that she demanded the same from her subordinates.

TLN: In this case, it's a 'any promise I make, I will keep' kind of pride

Because he saw that look, Rei relaxed his body, which had been tense as he straightforwardly confronted Elena.

「I understand. I will believe in Elena-sama's words.」

Leaving with those words, he stored that Lizardman that Elena had killed into the Misty Ring.

After that, he stored the four Water Monkeys that seemed to be the aides of the rare species as well as the lower ranking monsters such as the Goblins and Fang Wolves. Even if they were of a low rank, they may still have some use. All the corpses of the monsters were stored into the Misty Ring.

Finally, the only things left on the battlefield were ruins, traces of monster blood and some monster parts that had been cut off. When they left the place, there was a possibility of attracting other monsters, so they buried everything into the ground.

After finishing that, they finally went down to the fifth floor.

「Listen up, according to the information we obtained from the adventurers we met on the third floor, the fifth floor seems to have undead. For that reason, we will change the formation. Rei, who can use fire magic, and Set, who can use

Fire Breath, will take the vanguard. Vel and I will take the middle guard. Ara and Kuust will take the rear guard.」

「That, is, Elena-sama. Me taking the rear guard with an axe.....」

As Ara muttered somewhat troubled, Elena shook her head without hesitation.

「In the fifth floor down, I'm asking you to prevent surprise attacks from behind. It is very likely that we will hear their footsteps when they move if it is an undead like a Skeleton or Zombie. However, Ghosts can approach without a sound. For that reason, I made Ara, who has sharp perception, and Kuust, who has high observation skills, the rear guard.」

「I-I understand! I will meet Elena-sama's expectations!」

「Ahh, I'll be relying on you. Are you okay with that Kuust?」

「No problem. I will prevent any surprise attacks from behind.」

Kuust nodded while smiling.

To say the truth about this formation, until yesterday, Elena had planned to take the middle guard with Kuust and give Vel and Ara the rear guard. But at the time of the fight with the Water Monkeys, seeing Rei and Kuust's argument over the 『Seed of Contract』, and after considering Rei's remarks about taking countermeasures if Kuust attacked, she had no choice but to use this formation. Elena judged that while searching the dungeon, it wasn't impossible that Kuust might target Rei from behind with a spell.

「Alright, let's go.」

Nodding at Elena's words, Rei and Set went down the stairs first.

Everyone was prepared to launch a counterattack so as not to be ambushed like they were on the third floor. In addition, Rei ordered Set to be ready to use Fire Breath at any time.

And as for what Rei saw when he arrived on the fifth floor after going down the long spiral staircase.....

「Dungeon, mushroom, forest, then dungeon again, is it.」

At the sight before his eyes, Rei muttered involuntarily.

Yes, what was spread before Rei's eyes was a dungeon the same as the first and second floors. The walls also glowed in the same way and the paths were also wide enough for Set to fight comfortably. There was just one difference.

「Guru~」

Set gave a sad cry. Rei immediately knew why. That was because.....

「The smell, isn't it.」

Yes, a smell of rotten meat drifted from everywhere.

(No. Something rotten.....it isn't. This is the undead floor, I should assume that the smell of rotten flesh is because of the undead that infest the floor.)

「It certainly stinks, it's only that much though?」

At the end, Ara muttered as she tilted her head. Vel heard her from beside him and spoke up while involuntarily covering his nose with his palm.

「No, this is really hard. It seems like there's no problem if you have an ordinary sense of smell like Ara, but it's quite tough if your senses are sharp like me and Set. Rei seems to be the same as well.」

So far, although he had understood that Rei had a high combat ability, he didn't think that Rei's sense were as sharp as his. Vel looked at Rei somewhat surprised.

(No. From his frown, his sense of smell might be even sharper than mine.)

「Well, because we have to pass through this floor anyway, I have no choice but to endure it. Even if you hate it, you'll be forced to get used to the smell.」

「I might be numb for a while.....well, that's fine. Any how, as Vel said, it's true that it's better to walk quickly through this floor. Let's go, Set.」

「Guru~」

Giving a cry which was somewhat stronger than before, they began to move forward.

Fortunately for the party, they couldn't lose their way as there was a single path for now.

While walking down the dungeon passage, his hands ready to use the Death

Scythe at any time, Rei unintentionally frowned his eyebrows as he looked at Set.

(It isn't possible to rely on Set's sense of smell due to the foul odour from this floor.No, it should still be considered a great help that we can rely on sight and hearing. Or on our sixth sense, intuition.)

They walked for about 10 minutes down the straight passage. Set, who was walking alongside Rei, suddenly stopped.

「Set?」

「Gurururu~」

Set gave a low cry to alert them as he watched the darkness ahead.

Rei knew what had happened just by looking. He firmly grasped the handle of the Death Scythe, ready to react to whatever would happen.

As for Elena, who was walking behind Rei, it seemed that she also understood the situation by looking. They all stared into the darkness with their weapons ready.

Kacha~, kacha~, kacha~, kacha~.

Such soft sounds gradually approached Rei's group.

「If these are footsteps.....is it Skeletons?」

Rei muttered as he recalled the information he had read about the undead from the monster encyclopedia.

That was the correct answer, it became clear in less than a minute. Two white skeletons appeared in the light from the walls.

(No. Because there are two Skeletons, should I count them?)

They consisted of white bones without a piece of flesh on their bodies. They looked just like a model of the human body. The eyes in the skull were also hollow, giving a terrible feel. The most different part from a human body was that there was a magic stone in it, protected by the ribs. When defeating an undead with physical attacks and not magic, the quickest way was to destroy the magic stone directly.

The Skeleton on the right had a rusty long sword. The Skeleton on the left held a spear and pointed the tip at Rei and Set.

Then, the two Skeletons silently attacked Rei.

The bones of the Skeletons' feet hit the dungeon floor with a kacha~, kacha~ sound as the two of them approached. While looking calmly at the Skeletons, Rei spoke up.

「Set.」

Set took one step forward at Rei's instruction. As the Skeletons approached in the meantime, Set took a deep breath without heeding them.....

「Gurururururu~!」

Flames spewed out from his beak along with his battle cry. Set's Fire Breath was his only level 2 skill. Its power was obvious as it swiftly swallowed up the two Skeletons approaching with weapons. In the dungeon passage, the temperature instantly rose by several degrees due to the Fire Breath. In addition, the dungeon walls emitted more light than its usual faint ambience.

After a few seconds, the only things that were left after Set's Fire Breath were blackened bones falling to the ground and a half melted long sword and spear.

Chapter 88

「.....Amazing.」

At Vel's voice from behind, Rei gave awry smile.

In front of him was the remains of the first two skeletons to attack them after coming down to the fifth floor..

The originally pure white bones were burnt black, some had already carbonised and crumbled. In that state, the bones of the two skeletons fell to the ground. If fought normally, this wouldn't have been the outcome. Because this result was achieved with one Fire Breath from Set, it was no wonder that Vel raised a voice of surprise.

To begin with, skeletons were rank E monsters. They were lower ranking monsters than the rank D Water Monkeys they had encountered on the fourth floor and the Lizardmen they had encountered on the third floor.

However, Skeletons were hated by other adventurers for the single reason that it was an undead. Basically, it was a monster that didn't have an ego. For that reason, it would not be frightened no matter how much it was damaged and would just attack the adventurers. Adding to that, the proof of subjugation of Skeletons was their magic stone, which was problematic. In order to defeat a skeleton with physical attacks, there was no other choice than to destroy the magic stone. As a result, it was subsequently difficult to obtain proofs of subjugation. For the similar reasons, you couldn't expect to get a lot of materials from such an ordinary monster.

If it was a higher ranking undead monster like a Skeleton Lord, its bones, strengthened by magical power, could be used as materials for weapons and armour. Or using alchemy, its material could be used to produce a magic item or special potion. However, this was impossible with the lowest ranking Skeletons.

「This is certainly reassuring to deal with the undead.」

Elena nodded at Vel's words and lightly stroked Set's back.

「Good boy. This floor will heavily rely on your Fire Breath, I'm counting on you.」

「Guru~」

After Set gave a small cry, they continued to explore after pushing the burnt bones, melted sword and melted spear, basically the remains of the Skeletons, aside.

It should be noted that in regards to the magic stones, which were also the proof of subjugation, they had been burnt together with the bones and had been destroyed.

Resuming their search after finishing their work, a few minutes after walking down the passage, the path branched off to the left and right.

「.....Well, what to do.」

Elena was troubled.

As they had no map, the correct path to advance could only be left to luck. And considering their situation from when they came down the dungeon, it was clear that they weren't lucky.

「Rei, which one do you think is better?」

At her question to Rei, there was someone who involuntarily scoffed his eyebrows. It was Kuust, who had been entrusted the rear with Ara.

(Just now, Elena-sama asked him what to do without hesitation. Of course, he is an adventurer, so that is not wrong. However, if there is anything she is unsure of, she should consult us first, then ask him later.As I thought, this person is a bad influence on Elena-sama)

As Kuust clenched his molars together, maybe noticing Kuust's look, Vel, who was watching Elena and Rei interestedly, unlike Kuust, took out a water bottle that was attached to his waist and held it out to him with a wry smile.

「Hey, let's take a drink and calm down for now. I understand that you don't like Rei, but it's natural that we rely on Rei as long as we are in a dungeon because he is an adventurer.」

「.....Hmph, it's fine if it's just that.」

After moistening his throat with the water from the bottle he took from Vel, he turned to look at Rei and spat out.

「As it is, I don't want any strange influences during the ritual at the Altar of Inheritance.」

「Kuust's worry is reasonable, but she has her own thought about this. If she wants to do it this way, what can you do about it?」

「I wonder why Margrave Rowlocks sent such an adventurer. In the first place it's a strange thing.....」

Kuust was going to complain further to Vel, but Elena's voice could be heard before he could say any more.

「Let's go to the right for now. If it is a dead end, we'll come back, but don't relax your guard as we advance.」

「I understand.」

「Well, anyhow, as we don't have a map, it will have to be our intuition. It's difficult to sense the existence of enemies with this odour.」

「You're right. Still, we should be able to hear sounds of movement, there's too many things that can't be seen visually in a dungeon.」

Elena nodded and went towards Rei.....or to be more accurate, towards the dungeon ahead.

Kuust looked at them while faintly frowning his eyebrows before returning the water bottle to Vel and following them.

It should be noted that with regards to Ara, she was aware that she still couldn't use the Power Axe she borrowed from Rei to it's full ability, she continued to adjust her body to it by swinging it gently while taking a break.

At Ara's appearance, Vel watched with a wry smile.

Although they had just fought a battle on the floor above, for various reasons, Ara's stamina had already recovered.

「Ara, don't you think it's a bit early to start again after exhausting your stamina earlier?」

With the Power Axe in hand, Vel turned to Ara, who was at the back, as directed by Elena, to watch out for surprise attacks.

At Vel's question, she spoke back with a wry smile as she held the Power Axe.

「That's true, I think so as well.....rather, it seems this Power Axe weapon has the effect of reducing the consumption of stamina. It's easy to use even compared to the long swords I've used.....its the right weapon for me. Rather than this, Vel should be taking precautions of the surroundings properly. I will not accept Elena-sama triggering a trap.」

「Yes, yes.」

Turning his eyes to look at Ara's Power Axe for a moment, he immediately turned to look ahead.

In order react quickly as soon as he saw any signs of traps, he looked at the passage ahead with sharp eyes instead of his usual casual manner.

Satisfied with Vel's attitude, Ara was cautious of the surroundings as she stroked the handle of the Power Axe. Anyhow, they would know if monsters like Zombies or the Skeletons from before approached. But because Ghosts could suddenly slip through walls and appear, they couldn't be careless.

(Even so, I received a lot more stamina after borrowing this Power Axe from Rei-dono. As expected, is this the effect of the magic item?)

Although Ara couldn't fully understand, the Power Axe had the ability to provide a constant recovery effect for the user. Of course, the effect was overwhelmingly lower than that provided by the Love of Shizukuishi that hung on Set's neck, its recovery was truly insignificant. However, as she had less stamina than Kuust, Vel and Elena, it was more than adequate.

It was about 20 minutes after they had gone down the right fork. Unexpectedly, a door installed into the wall came into Rei's eyes.

「As expected of a dungeon, there are also rooms.」

「Gururu~」

Enter? Set seemed to ask as he tilted his head to one side. Rei called out behind him as he stroked Set's head.

「Elena-sama, there's a door in front, what do you want to do?」

「.....A door, is it. I don't think the stairs to the sixth floor would be so soon after we came down to the fifth floor.....still, there is a possibility it could happen.

Vel, check if there are any traps.」

「Roger that. Sorry, just a moment.」

Vel began to examine the handle in the space between Rei and Set. In order not to disturb him, Rei and Set took a step back and watched out for any approaching undead.

「Hmm, I see. Ah, in this way.....uwa~, is this also a dummy? In that case, this?」

Although Vel seemed to examine the handle while muttering something happily, after a few minutes.....a click echoed into the surroundings.

「Whew, I've managed to successfully disarm the trap. There was quite a nasty trap placed. When someone pulled the handle, a needle would pop out. Moreover, it's clearly poisoned.」

Vel proudly showed the needle. It was short at 5cm in length and was wet with a liquid that certainly seemed to be poison as he had said.

(A poisoned needle.....is it. I wonder, can I use it for something?)

Rei thought that in his mind and called out to Vel, who was about to throw it away.

「Vel, if you're going to throw it away, could you give me the poisoned needle?」

「.....No, I don't mind. What use do you have for something this dangerous?」

「I don't know yet, fortunately I have an item box. You don't need to worry about accidentally stabbing yourself or other people with it.」

Vel turned to look at Elena after thinking for a few seconds. Elena nodded, indicating that there were no problems.

「I understand, here.However, I don't know what poison it is so handle it carefully.」

「I've said that there are no problems.」

Saying that, he passed the poisoned needle to Rei to store into the Misty Ring.

「Right, then, I'll open the door.」

Settling the matter of the needle, Vel finally put his hand to the door. The

door opened with a gii~ sound and the inside became visible.

The inside of the room wasn't too big, about 6 tatami. It gave the impression of being spacious as there was only a single treasure chest in the center of the room. Everyone entered the small room and moved towards the treasure chest.
TLN: 6 tatami is about 10 square meters

「.....Suspicious.」

Vel muttered involuntarily. In his eyes, the treasure chest placed in the room was clearly a trap.

TLN: IT'S A TRAP!

「Eh? Really? It's a dungeon, so why would a treasure chest be strange?」
「No, in the first place, undead wander around on this fifth floor. Who would use a treasure chest.」

「.....Is it an undead with an ego?」

「Well, although those may exist.....but, do you think it could be bothered to place a chest in the middle of the room and then leave? What do you think Ara? You don't hide your precious things or leave treasure chests standing out in the middle of a room do you?」

After considering Vel's point for a few seconds.....she nodded.

「That's true. I wouldn't do such a careless thing.」

「Right? In other words, this treasure chest is unnatural.」

「So you mean it's a trap?」

「Perhaps.Elena-sama, what will you do? I would like to leave it as it is.」

「I wonder. Needless to say, it can't be stairs of any sort. As for the need to take necessary risk.....fall back!!」

The moment they heard her voice, as expected of knights under Elena, they all reflexively jumped back. In addition, Rei and Set also jumped back.

Noticing something approach him, Rei reflexively swung the Death Scythe. However, because it approached from his left side, it was the handle that was swung, rather than the blade.

Something flew away with a dull sound. After taking some distance just in case, they turned to look at it. What they saw was a hound made of bones.

「.....」

It had the silence peculiar to skeletons, although it was blown away without raising a sound, it was only an attack on point of contact, it wasn't strong enough to kill it in a single blow. The hound made of bones used its momentum from being blown away to take some distance, dulling the impact using its feet to push against the wall before landing on the floor.

「I knew it, it was a trap after all!」
「No need to say it! Vel, ready your weapons! This fellow, it did quite well for it's size!」

At Rei readied his Death Scythe and Vel took out a knife from his waist as Rei said that.

As expected, given the quick movements and distance in this situation, he judged that a knife was more advantageous than a bow and arrow.

However, there was something that moved faster than them.

「Gururururu~!」

With a sharp cry, Set kicked against the floor and closed the gap to the Skeleton Hound before it had time to react.

Swinging his big forefeet, he smashed the Skeleton Hound to the ground from above.

With the Griffon's unique strength and combining that with the effect from the Bracelet of Herculean Strength, almost all the Skeleton Hound's bones were crushed and scattered without any resistance.

Chapter 89

「I was surprised.」

At the spectacle spread before her, Elena's voice echoed into the small, narrow room.

In the room with a treasure chest, they had suddenly been attack by a Skeleton Hound. After Rei, who blocked the surprise attack, the next moment, Set had jumped forward on his own and made a single attack with his tough forefeet. Elena could only admire the series of actions that literally broke the Skeleton Hound apart.

「Gurururu~」

Understanding that he was being praised, Set swung his lion tail while giving a happy cry.

Although Elena leaked a smile for a moment, she quickly surveyed the room.

Fortunately, there didn't seem to be any traps or hidden monsters other than the treasure chest.

「In other words, this room is designed completely for adventurers.」

「.....But, I don't think normal adventurers would fall for such an obvious trap.」

Vel muttered while looking at the treasure chest where the Skeleton Hound was hiding.

「Well, that is certainly so.」

「But hey, didn't we fall for it?」

At Ara's words, Vel unintentionally gave a bitter smile.

Kuust called out to the two of them with a wry smile.

「Even if you say that, we didn't actually open the treasure chest. It's probably a trap to make a surprise attack when someone goes near, even if they don't open the treasure chest.No, Ara would have opened it normally and would have been caught by the ambush.」

While listening to such exchanges in the background, Rei checked the remains of the Skeleton Hound that was quite literally crushed by Set.

「Magic stone.....impossible. As for the bones, they can't be used as material since they've been shattered.」

「Guru~.....」

Because it was crushed by Set's power, not only the bones, but the magic stone protected by the bones had also been smashed.

To Set, who came over with an apologetic cry, Rei shook his head slightly.

「Don't mind it, there was a possibility of me getting injured if you didn't jump out.」

Standing up while scratching Set's head, he shook his head at Elena, who was looking at him.

「There's no use. For now, there's nothing else in this room so I wonder if we should keep going.」

「I guess so.Right, time to resume the search. Vel, Ara, Kuust.」

At Elena's call, the three people who were talking with smiling faces immediately gave a serious nod.

As they went back out into the passage after leaving the room, their formation was as when they entered the room, Rei and Set were at the vanguard, Elena and Vel were the middle guards with Ara and Kuust in the rear guard.

「.....That?」

Rei noticed it after walking for about 20 minutes after leaving the small room.

「Guru~?」

Set also tilted his head, feeling that something was strange.

Elena felt puzzled at the person and animal and looked around as well. However, she didn't notice anything in particular.

「Rei, did something happen?」

「Ah.....No, it just feels like we've walked down this passage before.....」

「What? But we haven't seen any branching paths since then? Is it your imagination?」

「Well, I'm not sure.....it might be better to leave a mark as a precaution for now. Set.」

「Gururu~!」

Understanding what was asked of him, Set marked several scratches into the dungeon wall with his claws.

「This will be used as a marker for now. After this we'll keep going.....」

「If we see Set's scratches on the wall, that means that we've been caught in some kind of trap.」

「Yes.」

Nodding at Elena, the party began walking down the dungeon path again. Only the sounds of footsteps and equipment rustling could be heard when Rei asked behind him.

「.....Vel, as a thief, what do you think?」

Vel opened his mouth before falling silent for a few seconds after remembering something.

「I certainly remember reading about a trap that caused space to loop in a book before I came to this dungeon. However, if that is true, it means the dungeon nucleus is of a very high level.No, or maybe there are undead that can use spatial magic.」

Spatial magic is a high level magic that is difficult to learn. The first thing that entered his head when an undead that had mastered spatial magic was mentioned was.....

「A Lich」

「We should consider that possibility. I honestly hope I'm wrong.」

Lich. They were mages reborn as undead. There were magicians that would conduct a ritual themselves to be reborn as a Lich, but rarely, mages with strong hatred and resentment might be revived as a Lich due to their strong regrets.

The degree of danger ranged widely depending on the level of the mage while they were still alive. There had been examples of G rank mages being revived as

Liches.

Because of that, the monster rank of Liches wasn't clearly defined. Following the previous example, there could be rank A Liches as well as rank G Liches. Though they commonly still had human consciousness, there were Liches that lacked awareness and rampaged on instinct alone.

「I guess so. A monster that can use magic, furthermore an undead one, is extremely troublesome. Let's pray that it isn't one.」

At Rei's words, everyone, Kuust included, nodded. They proceeded while paying attention to the right wall, which was the side Set had scratched. After continuing for about 20 minutes, they eventually reached a place where the wall was marked with scratches.

「This determines it, it seems?」

Rei spoke those words with a sigh. However, his words were said as if questioning it rather than asserting it.

There was no mistake, the wall in front of them was the one Set had scratched 20 minutes ago. But.....

「Rei, is this really the mark from before?」

Vel, who was behind Rei, asked him. A feeling of disbelief was mixed in his voice.

「Ah. There's no mistake, this mark was made with Set's attack. But it's not.....」

For an instant, Rei glanced at the wall.

Set's scratch was certainly marked on the wall. However, the reason Vel didn't confirm it was because the depth of the mark was different. Even though the mark made by Set's claws went 5cm deep, the mark in front of Vel was only 1cm deep.

「Perhaps, maybe there's some sort of magic in the wall that will make it naturally recover. In combination with an infinite loop, it's a nasty match.」

「Uwa~, that certainly is the worst.」

The fastest way for them to check if they were stuck in an infinite loop was to

put a mark somewhere. As most adventurers had weapons, most would leave a scratch as a mark. But if you left a mark on a naturally recovering wall like these walls, it would become very difficult. Although it was possible to leave some sort of tool to use as a marker instead of a scratch on the wall, it can't be said that it would work for sure as they might be taken by monsters wandering in the dungeon.

「It's certainly troublesome, but we able to figure it out much faster thanks to Set.」

Elena spoke to the two of them and said that.

Set was a Griffon and had extraordinary strength compared to a human, at the same time, his strength was also boosted because he had equipped the magic item, Bracelet of Herculean Strength. If they had walked around the place over and over again, it would consume their mental as well as physical strength. It could be said that they were lucky that didn't happen.

「But Elena-sama, how do we get out of this infinite loop?」

「I can't think of one at the moment. I'm sorry, but let me think for a bit. As for everyone else, it would be better to conserve your stamina instead of moving around since we are in an infinite loop. Also, tell me if you think of any ideas.」

「But, I don't think we could think of anything that Elena-sama wouldn't think of.....」

「Ara, I am not omniscient. You may think of things I don't think of, don't deprecate yourself.」

「.....I understand. I'll think about it.」

With that said, everyone saw Ara close her eyes to think and startedd to think of a way out of this situation themselves.

Elena crossed her arms and observed the passage ahead of her. Vel slowly examined the wall where the scratches that Set made were slowly repairing themselves. Kuust looked at the surroundings while placing his hand on his chin. Rei became absorbed in his thoughts while stroking Set's back. Set decided not to disturb anyone and lay down on the floor, alert of any undead that might try a surprise attack.

(Spatial loop. In other words, it started when we entered the trap

somewhere. If that's so, we should know where then?No, that's no good. The easiest way is to defeat the monster that set up this trap.....in the first place, this may not be a trap set up by a monster. Also, even if it was a monster, it may not be in this place.)

Rei thought for a way out while looking at the wall. However, the scratches made by Set on the wall had almost been restored. He could only see traces of it.

(It can't be helped, should I draw on Zepairu's knowledge after so long? Considering the time that has passed since Zepairu has died, it's a little difficult to say if his knowledge can be trusted 100%.)

While muttering secretly, he looked at the Zepairu's knowledge on spatial magic.....no, he drew out information on spatial magic.

(How to get out of a looped space.....defeating the opponent is rejected. Use magic with magic power greater than the allowable amount in the looped space.Although that is possible, the consumption on my reserves would be too intense. Destroy the space itself with spatial magic.....that's rejected since I can't use spatial magic myself. The most certain method is to destroy the place where the space starts to loop, it seems. I know that's the easiest, but how to find that starting point.Hmm, I see. In this case my consumption isn't that great, so it's worth a try?)

Exploring Zepairu's knowledge, Rei judged that it was possible for him to manage somehow and turned his eyes to Elena.

「Elena-sama, I came up with an idea that might possibly work.」

「Hou~, interesting. Please tell me.」

「Although this space has been looped, now that we were moved here, there should be a place somewhere connecting back to the original space. If you destroy that starting place, the looping space will be broken and we can return to the original space.」

「But now, how would you search for the starting point? Are you going to destroy the passage bit by bit? No way, that is too troublesome. How long would it take to destroy a wall that naturally recovers.」

Rei shook his head slightly at Vel's words.

「The method itself isn't too difficult. I can set the entire passage on fire with my magic to locate the starting point.」

That was a solution that could only be called brute force, Elena frowned her eyebrows slightly.

「Can you do it? I think that that will require a considerable amount of magic power.」

「That's probably not a problem. I have a bracelet equipped that can take away magic power from enemies.」

While saying so, he held out his left wrist so that everyone could see, not the right wrist with the Misty Ring.

There certainly was a bracelet there, which seemed to be some sort of magic item.

「This magic item is called Bracelet of Magic Absorption. When the equipped person attacks an enemy, it is an excellent item that can absorb magic power proportional to the damage dealt to the enemy.」

「.....Never mind. Indeed it's a coveted item for those that use magic. Was it also given to you by your master?」

「That is so. Well, as Elena-sama knows, I have a large amount of magic power so I rarely have to depend on it. And basically, mages don't have any techniques to directly attack enemies to hurt them.Then, is it okay to try the method I suggested?」

「It's probably best to try Rei's method unless you can think of anything else. Try it.」

Nodding at Elena's words, he made sure everyone was gathered in one place so as to not be caught in the spreading flames and cast the spell.

『Fire, burn while spreading red flames. Turn into a carpet of fire that follows my will.』

While chanting the incantation, a flame the size of his fist appeared at the Death Scythe's handle.....he then stabbed the handle into the floor!

『Thin Flame!』

The magic was activated at that moment. The flame at the tip of the Death

Scythe exploded out and spread across the ground, ceiling and walls as Rei slammed it against the ground. The flames range spread rapidly and after a few seconds, covered everything Rei saw.

「.....It isn't hot?」

While listening to Ara's strange voice, Rei poured more magic power into his magic to spread the range of the flames. Although the flames were at the abnormally low temperature of 20°C, Rei's magic power was being rapidly consumed due to its large spread. And after a few minutes, in the opposite direction Rei was looking at, flames appeared from behind them, showing where the space was looped.

「.....I've found it!」

Rei, who had been concentrating on maintaining the flames, gave a shout and dispelled the flames as he ran down the passage, brandishing the Death Scythe.

Set instantly followed while Elena was lost for a moment before she followed.

By the time Elena caught up, Rei had already swung the Death Scythe towards one side of the wall.

「Haah!」

The blade of the Death Scythe swung down. The blade ripped part of the wall.....and the next moment, a sound like breaking glass reverberated. In front of them was the small room where they had fought the Skeleton Hound earlier.

Chapter 90

「Did we escape from that space?」

Elena muttered as she looked at the small room in front of them.

As Rei nodded at Elena's words, he turned to look at the door as well.

「I think that this room is probably the trigger to trap adventurers in the space loop.」

「Then, that means that the Skeleton Hound lurking in the treasure chest was a fake」

Elena frowned bitterly at the door before letting out a sigh and turning her eyes towards the end of the passage.

「It can't be helped that we were caught in the trap once. Anyhow, we will keep advancing down the passage. Vel, because there are traps like that, stay very alert.」

「Roger that, roger that. As expected, it would affect my pride if we were to be caught in a similar trap multiple times.」

Vel replied to Elena in a light tone, but his eyes showed that he felt humiliation at being so easily caught in a trap.

A bit further away, Kuust bit his lips as he watched, also feeling humiliated at being caught in the trap.

「Hey, Vel aside, Kuust hasn't had the training so you don't need to feel so bad. The two of them are going to go ahead so we can leave it to them.」

Ara patted Kuust, who held his magic spear ready, lightly on the shoulder before following Elena and Rei, who had gone ahead first.

Realising the situation, Vel and Kuust also hurried after them.

「.....Honestly, it hurts my pride to fall into a trap so easily.」

「Hmph, you barely have any pride left.」

「Hey Kuust, isn't that a bit nasty? That aside, I'm more wondering why you are mortified at.」

「Because I, who am a noble, fell into the trap of a monster, it is natural that I would feel humiliated.」

Listening to Kuust's words, which were bitterly spat out, Vel gave a wry smile as he took the water bottle from his waist and moistened his throat.

「Hey, you can take a drink as well. There's no use being angry at such a place. Both of us will take more care next time.」

「.....Hmph.」

While giving a snort, he received the water bottle and drank a mouthful to moisten his mouth and throat before passing it back to Vel.

While talking like that, they caught up with Elena and rebuilt the formation of vanguard, middle guard and rearguard before advancing cautiously.

「Given the previous trap, we should think that there are still other traps. Everyone take care. Vel, concentrate on looking for traps instead of watching the surroundings please. As long as nothing big comes out, with Set here, we will be on guard against the surroundings.」

「Guru~!」

Set gave a cry saying leave it to me and went forward with Rei.

They advanced like this for about 10 minutes.....

「Gururu~」

Set gave a deep cry as he looked down the passage.

「An immediate enemy. Because they didn't think we could break through the space loop so fast, they rushed to intercept us.....is that it?」

「Well then, that possibility is high but we can't be careless.」

Elena held her sword whip as she replied to Vel. The others also all readied their weapons, ready to enter combat at any time.

「Ara, Kuust. Both of you carefully watch the back. If the undeads on this floor are being moved by someone's instructions, there's a possibility of aiming for a pincer from the front and back.」

「I understand. Please leave the back to us!」

「We will not show mistakes like before.」

After Rei heard those voices from behind, he then heard footsteps coming from the end of the passage.

Becha~, Becha~, Becha~, Becha~, Becha~.

There was a sound of something wet hitting the ground. There were quite a few.

And at the same time.....

「Guru~」

Set raised an unhappy cry. At the same time, an intense smell of rotten flesh drifted to Rei's nose, whose five senses were much sharper than the ordinary person.

「Ugh!」

Elena and Vel looked at Rei strangely, who unconsciously held his nose with his left hand. After a few more seconds, Vel, whose senses were also sharper than the average human, held his nose while groaning. Then Elena frowned silently and held her nose.

Before long, the damp footsteps approached. The identity of the damp footsteps and the putrid smell became apparent.

Some had half rotted bodies with their rib bones exposed, others had gooey liquid coming out of their eye sockets.

Every time they took a step, an odour would drift out and flesh and liquid would fall on the ground, making sounds as a countless shadows went towards Rei.

「Zombies, is it.」

Rei muttered bitterly. With his sharp senses, the direct hit from the putrid smell had already left him half paralyzed. It was the same for Set, whose sense were even sharper than Rei's. Set turned his eyes to the nearly 20 Zombies and gave a groaning cry in a bad mood.

Meanwhile, noticing the Zombies, Vel spoke up unpleasantly.

「Wait a minute, there are some Zombies with armour equipped.....could that

mean that.」

「.....I wonder. Perhaps this is the fate of adventurers who lose their lives on this floor.」

「Ugh, as I thought.I would hate it if I ended up like that.」

Elena confirmed Vel's thoughts and turned to look unpleasantly at the Zombies who were gradually approaching.

Adventurers who challenged the dungeon naturally wanted to avoid dying here. The danger of death always accompanied diving into the dungeon. However, even if you died here, your corpse would be turned into a toy by a Lich, which Vel absolutely wanted to avoid.No, not just Vel, it was the opinion of everyone here.

Effective attacks against ordinary undead, such as holy magic and fire magic were also effective against Zombies. Or, if you didn't mind coming in contact with rotten corpses, you could also target the magic stone buried inside their flesh.

Fortunately for Elena and the others, there was a mage and monster that could use fire magic in the party.

Even if Elena was famous as the General Princess, while she wouldn't shudder at the sight of Zombies, she was still grateful from the bottom of her heart that Rei and Set were in the party.

Even if Kuust's relationship with Rei had rapidly deteriorated, it was the same for him. If he the event occurred that he had to fight Zombies himself, it would be a very unpleasant battle.

「.....Hey, Kuust.」

Ara, who was next to Kuust, tapped his armour as he was imagine the worst outcome.

Pulling himself together at the kon~, kon~ sound, Kuust looked at Ara.

「What's wrong?」

「How to say it, this deployment is as expected of Elena-sama but.....what do you think?」

「.....What?」

「Here, listen carefully.」

Following Ara's words, he focused his concentration on listening. Then, becha~, the sound of Zombies walking was heard. But, listening to the sounds.....

「Tch!」

Kuust turned around while holding his magic spear and clicking his tongue.

Yes. They could hear the footsteps of Zombies approaching. There were also the footsteps of another existence coming closer to them with a different timing in step. However, it was not from in front, but from behind.

「Elena-sama, the enemy is attack from behind as expected. I think from the footsteps, it's probably also Zombies.」

「Someone we don't know seems to be giving us a grand welcome. Ara, Kuust, keep yourselves to defense until Rei and Set have their hands free!」

Listening to Elena's instructions, the two of them readied their weapons as the approaching Zombies came into view, walking with a becha~, becha~ sound.

「Using an axe to attack a Zombie seems miserable in a variety of ways.....」

「That's the same for me.」

「But, Kuust's weapon is a spear. If you think in terms of distance, it's absolutely more advantageous for you.」

「Still, this magic spear was handed down my family, I'm very unwilling to have to defile it on the rotten flesh and blood of undeads like Zombies.」

「Then we can only buy time until Rei or Set does something.」

「.....Hmph.」

He didn't want to rely on Rei so much. Answering with a snort, he looked at the approaching Zombies without arguing if it was better to leave it to Rei or to fight directly. He started chanting an incantation while touching the ear ring that was pierced in his right ear.

『Great spirit of water, reveal five fierce fangs.』

The world was changed through the ear ring, which was a magic casting tool, and 5 conical spikes made of water were formed. They were about 10cm in diameter, and actually, was the strongest magical attack available to Kuust.

Either way, though he was good at water magic, he basically focused on healing magic and wasn't so good at offensive magic.

『Water Fang!』

The water spikes were released with the activation of the magic, piercing the face, body and limbs of the silent, walking Zombies.

However, because Zombies didn't have a sense of pain in the first place, after stopping for a few seconds at the impact of the water spikes, it started moving again.

「It's useless!」

Although he had expectations, Ara unintentionally crushed any hope that he had.

Meanwhile, something suddenly passed above Kuust and Ara and landed in front of them.

「Guru~!」

Needless to say, it was Set the Griffon.

For an instant, Ara turned to look at the vanguard. There were Zombies that had already been charred black and had fallen to the ground. The Zombies that were still moving had their false lives taken by fireballs Rei shot out.

「Ara, Kuust. The vanguard has managed somehow with Set. Leave the attack on the Zombies at the back to Set, focus on defense!」

「Yes!」

Ara replied to Elena and was wary of the remaining approaching Zombies as she held the Power Axe.

To attack, Set took a deep breath as a Zombie approached him with its arms raised in silence.

「Gurururururu~!」

Fire Breath was released from his beak, wrapping the approaching Zombie in flames.

「Uwa~,wai-!」

Although Fire Breath was used, it couldn't char a Zombie in an instant as it was only level 2. The Zombies neared Set. And as the distance between Set and where Ara and Kuust were standing became zero.....

「Gururururu~!」

Set unleashed Fire Breath while raising a roar that echoed through the dungeon.

Although it was truly only level 2, the putrid flesh of the Zombie was carbonized without any resistance after being wrapped in flames twice. It wasn't able to swing its hands that it had thrown up and fell down on the spot.

After seeing such a sight two times, then three times in a row, Ara noticed that all the Zombies that had been attacking them from behind had all burned up and fallen to the ground.

「Gururururu~!」

In front of the Zombies, that had been burned and carbonized, Set raised a cry of victory and approached Rei, who had cleaned up the remaining Zombies in the vanguard, who patted his head.

「Well then, you did your best. We were able to overwhelm the Zombies thanks to Set.」

「Gururu~」

While complimenting Set and taking out some dried meat from the Misty Ring to give to him, Rei turned to look at Elena.

「Elena-sama, let's get away from here for now. We don't know who the enemy is and there is a possibility of reinforcements being sent if we stay here.」
「.....That's right. We should certainly avoid a battle here as Rei and Set are our only effective means of attack against the undead. Let's go, I want to find a way to the 6th floor by today if possible.」

Everyone nodded at Elena's words and formed into a row before advancing through the dungeon.

By the way, the Zombies that were burnt up also had their magic stones destroyed as a matter of course. They were unable to obtain any sort of

material.

Actually Rei had expectations over whether any skills could be learned from the magic stones of Skeletons and Zombies. However, he felt that it would be too awkward right now if he tried to see if Set or the Death Scythe could acquire new skills.

Chapter 91

「It's finished over there so I would like you to give up.....right!」

Elena's sword whip stretched out like a whip and pierced the Skeleton from under its chin. Using that momentum, she flicked the skull off its spine.

「Seriously! They only have their tenacity!..」

Ara swung the Power Axe at the Skeleton that had lost its skull. The force was tremendous, the axe crushed the Skeleton's left arm and went into its ribs, breaking the magic stone inside its chest.

「.....」

As for the monster, after the magic stone, that could be called the core of the undead, was destroyed, its bones fell apart and dropped to the ground without a sound, entering an eternal rest.

Next to her, Vel cooperated with Kuust to deal with a skeleton.

And behind them.....

『Flame, burn the enemy according to my thoughts.』

At the back, a fireball 30cm in diameter appeared at the tip of the Death Scythe, which was also a magic casting tool.....

『Fireball!!』

The fireball flew away as the Death Scythe was swung down and the magic activated. It hit the Zombies that were approaching Rei from behind.

Next to him, Set took a deep breath and wrapped multiple Zombies in flames as he used Fire Breath.

In terms of raw power, the fireball Rei shot had the power to kill a Zombie in a single blow, if there was only one target. It was only good for hitting one enemy and damaging the surrounding enemies slightly. On the other hand, Set's fire breath was less powerful, it had a wide range of attack and could be used to attack Zombies that were much closer. The fireball was used to attack the

Zombies which were still out of range of Set's Fire Breath.

The first enemies to appear were Skeletons. Though they were easy for Rei and Set to defeat, Zombies then appeared from behind. This repeated like the infinite loop. Eventually, the smell of burnt rotten flesh became a bother as Rei and Set repeatedly used Fireball and Fire Breath. And in the front, Elena handled the Skeletons, which were just bones.

And when Rei and Set finally cleared the Zombies, they went to help against the Skeletons. Not much time was needed after that to finish the battle.

「Phew, I can't get any materials from this. If we don't destroy the magic stone, we can't defeat the Skeletons, but then we can't take it as proof of subjugation. It's only a fight that exhausts stamina for no gain.」

At Vel's words, Rei nodded with a wry smile.

「That is really true. If it was a higher level undead, the bones could be sold as material. It really is bone breaking work for no reward.」

「What does that mean?」

Elena asked while tilting her head at Rei's words. At the shake of her vertical rolls of hair as she tilted her head with puzzled eyes, Rei explained.

「This was a proverb my master taught me. It means that you exhaust yourself for no profit.However, in our case, we are breaking bones literally.」

「Kukuku~. Well, that is certainly so. With such a meaning, Ara probably spend the most effort for the least results.」

「Wai-, Vel! It's not that bad!?!」

「No, no. Any how, Ara, who was originally a famous swords-woman, changed her weapon to an axe, so surely you're the champion of destruction! I think I can say that.」

「.....Heh~. If that's so, then should I destroy Vel's mouth which talks that much?」

Slowly, maybe sensing a crisis as Ara lifted the Power Axe and not wanting to talk to Rei, Vel hid behind Kuust, who was also backing away.

「Help, you're kidding. You don't have to be so serious about everything. Hey, Kuust You also think so, right!?!」

「Don't involve me in your petty quarrel. No, but that is so. Vel's talkative mouth should really be destroyed once. Ara, I leave it to you.」

「Leave it to me. As expected of the captain of the guards, you have great discernment.」

A Kuust grabbed Vel's shoulder and pushed forward the human sacrifice, Vel desperately spoke up as he turned his head around.

「Hey, Kuust! Are you betraying your best friend!?!」

「Who is my best friend, who is that?」

「Yes, yes, please wait for your best friend, Ara, to come.」

「Wai-, hey, hey. Are you seriously angry!?!」

While watching the half comedic exchange, Rei looked at the bones of the Skeleton that was shattered by Elena's attack.

(I wish they were bones of higher ranking undead.)

Even though he had become more accustomed to the act of stripping materials from monsters, he would still make mistakes in the stripping and processing of materials. But sometimes it wasn't necessary to strip any materials. Bones that could just be picked up and sold as materials were quite attractive to him.

.....Of course, as fire magic wasn't used in this case, the magic stone had to be destroyed physically as Elena had done.

As he looked at the remains of the Skeletons while thinking of that, Elena clapped her hands to attract everyone's attention.

「Well then, we will restart the search soon. We won't change the file formation we had before.」

Following those instructions, they quickly formed into the vanguard, middle guard and rear guard and walked down the passageway for several minutes, before finding something familiar in their path.

「Elena-sama, although I found a door ahead.....there are two of them.」

Yes, ahead of Rei's line of sight, there were two doors, facing left and right.

Hearing Rei's report, Elena frowned her eyebrows slightly.

It couldn't be helped. The first door they had found on this floor was a small room that was a lure to trap them inside a space loop.

「.....Ignore them?」

Vel asked Elena from the side, but she immediately shook her head.

「No, we can't, considering the possibility that the staircase to the next floor could be there. If we passed by without checking, and we finally find out that that the stairs are in this small room, it won't be funny. Vel, check if there's a trap or not. Be careful to not make things end up like last time.」

「Yes. So, which one? Right? Left?」

「I don't mind either way. In the end, you will have to examine both. Check the one which is easier for you.」

「All right. Well then, right first. As for everyone else, keep a watch on the surroundings please.」

Vel went ahead of Rei and Set and began to examine the door on the right. Elena and the others spread out in a fan shape to protect Vel.

As for Elena's aim, she planned for them to recover their stamina while Vel was investigating if there were traps.....however, that goal soon collapsed.

「That? This door, there's no traps at all? It isn't even locked.」

「.....What?」

「Here.」

His eyes held great confidence. Vel majestically opened the door in front of everyone. Everyone who saw that readied themselves, but after no traps activated, they lowered their weapons.

「Vel, I understand that there were no traps but please act a little more carefully. What were you going to do if was a delayed trap.」

「I would like you to trust me about this. Well then, what's inside this room.....hm? Ah, it's useless.」

Vel looked into the room before shaking his head with a bitter smile. They could roughly guess from that look, but everyone still took a look inside just in case.

「Certainly, this.....」

Ara gave a bitter smile. The others didn't have any expression in particular, but held the same thought as Ara in their heart. They were unable to hide their discouragement as they shook their heads or smiled bitterly.

There was really nothing in the room. Even in the small room that was the start of the infinite loop previously had a treasure chest that had some meaning, inside was a monster, this room really had nothing. If it had to be said what was in the room, it would only be dust.

「.....Vel, sorry, but try checking the inside of the room. Maybe there's something like a hidden door or stairway.」

「Eh? Examine this room!?!」

「That's right. Please.」

「.....Yes, yes, I understand.」

「Then everyone else take a break while on guard. It will be noon soon. Let's make it quick while Vel investigates.」

「Wai-, Elena-sama. What about my share!?!」

「You can have yours after you finish examining this room. Don't worry, you can check the room on the left after eating lunch and taking a break.」

「What, I seem to have been overworked since entering the dungeon.....no, because I entered knowing that, I can't complain.....」

Vel began looking around the room while grumbling complaints. Still, he didn't push Elena's words out of his mind and didn't cut corners while investigating. Though he muttered complaints, his work could be trusted.

「Well then, lunch is meat pies and consomme vegetable soup. Ah, will Set be fine with the Orc meat we roasted during breakfast?」

「Gurururu~」

Set gave a cry while nodding at Rei's question. However, his eyes turned subtly to the meat pies that were taken out earlier.

「Guru~」

Just a little, Set seemed to say. Rei smiled as he nodded at Set, who had tilted his head.

「I understand, I understand. You can share some of mine.」

In the first place, Rei's body was an artificial one and had a bad energy efficiency, requiring him to eat more than an ordinary person. But even the food he ate, he had to be happy that it was nothing compared to the quantity that Set had to eat.His equipment and accessories were his own. If there was anything he had to buy, it would be consumables for requests and daily necessities. Even if his Engel's Coefficient was high, combining his expenditure on his hobby of reading books and given his earnings, it wasn't a big problem.

TLN: Engel's Law states that the more you earn the less percentage wise you will spend on food. A high Engel's Coefficient just means he spends a greater proportion on food.

「.....Uwa~, delicious! The pie dough is crispy and it still holds the meat and mushrooms.」

「Ara, this consomme soup is also excellent. I'm impressed at the skill of the chef.」

Next to Ara and Elena, who were eating their lunch with great relish, Set took a bite of one of Rei's meat pies and gave a satisfied cry.

On the opposite side to Rei, Kuust ate his lunch silently.

「I think at every meal, Rei's item box is very convenient. Even if you march with the supply corps, you can't have such luxurious meals.」

「Luxurious, is it? Wouldn't this fall under simple meals for nobles?」

「It surely is so if you think of a noble's meals. However, when moving with the Knight and the army, the rations are simple. Before leaving the City of Gimuru, have you ever brought along some of the military rations? Those are common.Well, depending on your rank and the place, there are different meals. There are some stupid nobles who don't understand and bring their own chefs so that they can eat the same food as when they stay at home.....in Duke Kerebel's army, the soldiers, knights and commanders eat together to build solidarity. It feels warm to be able to eat luxurious, freshly cooked food like this every time.」

While listening to Elena's story, as she gracefully carried the soup to her mouth, Rei also finished the last of his meat pies.

And just at that time, Vel appeared from the small room on the right.

「I've been thinking that that smells good for a while.....it's amazing to be able to properly smell these delicious smells even in this den of undead.Ah, I inspected the inside of the room closely but it really is an empty room with nothing special. Of course, there are no hidden stairs or rooms.」

「I see, I've put you through a lot of trouble. Get your food from Rei and have lunch. We will finish eating soon so we'll keep watch while you're taking a break.」

「Roger that, roger that. By the way, lunch is.....ah, it's meat pies and consomme soup Well, both are my favourites, I'm happy.」

Vel smiled happily as he immediately bit into the meat pie that Rei passed him.

Chapter 92

「Whew.....well then, I've eaten my meal and even taken a break. Now then, I should examine the other door.」

Vel stood up and brushed off the pie crumbs that had stuck to his clothes with his hands.

Rei, who had already finished his lunch nearby, stood up like Vel.

「Gururu~」

Set, who had been keeping watch by himself, got up from lying on the floor.

Though Rei and Elena basically left it to Set, they still recognised that it was possible for the enemy to make a surprise attack. After all, in this floor of undead, his sense of smell had been sealed by the odour. Because of that, while Elena and Rei were talking during their break after the meal, they were still somewhat wary.....fortunately, they were able to finish their lunch without any enemies attacking.

「That said.....as a door facing a door which had nothing inside, I shouldn't have my hopes up for finding anything inside.」

Vel muttered while examining the door for traps. But.....

「Hou~? No, correction. Maybe there is something here.」

Vel's surprised voice echoed into the surroundings.

「What is it, did something happen?」

「Yes. I can confirm that it's something different to the room on the right that I checked first. Unless it was so, it would be strange for a trap to be placed here.」

Vel answered Elena's question while examining part of the handle.

His tone was light as usual, but as expected of a guard of Elena, the General Princesses, he followed procedures while investigating the handle with some instruments.

「Okay.....because this is a dummy.....good. Trap disarmed! Well, maybe we

can expect quite a bit from this room. Any how, if you opened the door carelessly, it would fire a specially made bow that was linked to the door. I think there is something that is being protected inside.」

「.....As was the first room, I hope it's not a dummy hiding a bigger trap.」

Vel returned a wry smile at Kuust's mutters.

「I won't make the same mistake twice. I also quickly checked the area around these rooms just in case. No traps in particular have been placed around here.」

「I hope so.」

As usual, Kuust kept his hand on his magic spear to guard against enemy surprise attacks.

Elena nodded while glancing to the side at Kuust. As Vel opened the door, he shifted his body away from the front of the room just in case.

And nothing in particular happened when he opened the door.....

「See. Didn't I tell you the trap was successfully disarmed?」

Certainly, as Vel had said, arrows didn't fly when he opened the door, nor did any other trap activate.

「Then you should have opened it majestically instead of hidden along the wall like that.」

「Hey hey, no matter what, I can't perfectly disarm all traps. It would be seriously bad if there was some kind of trap I didn't notice.」

「Sure, sure. So, what's inside the room?」

Vel looked inside as Ara asked.

「It looks like a hit. It seems to be some kind of laboratory.」

「.....Laboratory? In a dungeon floor like this?」

「Ah, perhaps it's the work of the fellow who's been targeting us after we entered this floor. I don't know if it's a Lich as we were talking about before.」

Elena, who heard the conversation between the two, nodded in understanding and turned to look at Rei.

「Rei, search the inside with Vel. There's a possibility a map of the floor is inside. If there's something related to magic, you will probably be the most

knowledgeable on it.」

「I don't mind.....」

Rei turned his eyes to Vel. Seeing that look, Vel guessed what Rei wanted to say and nodded.

「Ah, thinking normally, it's strange that there's a laboratory in the dungeon. In the first place, anyone can find the door here. We are not the only ones that enter the dungeon. At the very least, the adventurers we met on the third floor said that there were undead on the fifth floor, so they would have made it here. It wouldn't be strange, after all, there were even adventurers who found what they think to be an Altar of Inheritance on the seventh floor. Other than finding this, there's no reason for it to be located in such an overly suspicious place.」

『That's because it's in a place in the reverse side of the dungeon space.』

The moment Vel spoke that question, everyone there heard a voice.

(.....No, did we hear that in our heads rather than hearing a voice? Is it like some sort of telepathy?)

The moment the voice rang in his head, Rei quickly readied the Death Scythe. Next to him, Elena pulled out her sword whip and held it, ready for an attack from any direction. Vel, Kuust and Ara were the same.

『Indeed, I've only left this place unattended for a little while and thieves have already come. It's impossible to experiment in peace.』

TLN: The voice refers to itself like an old man.

While the voice echoed in his head, the existence that the voice came from couldn't be seen anywhere.

Rei quickly looked around but couldn't find the owner of the voice.

「.....Come out.」

Although Elena's voice echoed around, no one, or anything in particular came out.

『Hahaha. I would obviously be attacked if I came out, do you think I would do that?』

「If you don't come out, don't you know what would happen to your

laboratory? Isn't it something important?」

Although Elena pointed the tip of her sword whip at the laboratory, the voice continued speaking as if with a smile.

『There certainly are important thing inside, but think about it carefully. Do you think that something really important would be placed inside a dangerous location like the dungeon? I admit that there are certainly things inside the laboratory that are worth something to me. However, most of the things inside are mainly for convenience, it's not difficult to replace them.』

「.....」

Listening to the voice, Elena thought of something. Kuust, who was watching the situation,

「Whether or not that is true can be verified. Any how, anyone who lurks in a dungeon can't be decent.」

「Wait, Kuust.」

Elena stopped Kuust who was readying his magic spear.

「Elena-sama, why!」

「I told you to wait.」

「.....I understand.」

Although reluctant, Kuust withdrew his spear. After seeing that, Elena spoke the the figureless voice again.

「1.....no, two questions. Can you give me an answer to them?」

『Hmm, is that so. Well, although you are thieves, I haven't had guests in a long time. It would be nice to amuse myself. I shall answer them if I can.』

Rei looked at the surroundings while listening to those words and noticed that Set didn't show any signs of movement after the voice had been heard. Normally, Set's curiosity would be very strong.

While confirming Set's figure, Rei saw that Set had pushed himself against the wall, trembling like a small fawn in front of a carnivore.

(.....What?)

Certainly, Set had only been born for a few months.....it had only been three

months since he had been born, let alone a year. Still, he was born as a Griffon, a rank A monster. Currently, Set was equipped with a large number of skills and and strong magic items. He had the power to fight evenly with the rank A party Axe of the Thunder God. Despite all that, Rei was shocked to find that Set was scared.

(In that case, the owner of this voice is at least stronger than Set.We should definitely avoid making an enemy out of it.....)

He turned to look at Elena, who was the leader of the party. Elena also happened to turn to look at Rei and their gazes overlapped. In that moment alone, Rei understood that Elena was also thinking about how to avoid fighting the owner of the voice. That was because Elena had also seen Set trembling for a moment.

Elena understood that Rei was also aware of Set's situation and gave a small nod as she spoke up.

「Firstly, we were targeted by undead monsters persistently after being caught in the infinite loop. You ordered them to do that, no doubt?」

『Hmm, I can be said so, it can also be said to be different. Those fellows were ordered to remove any people who trespassed. That's why.』

「That is to say, you don't intend to fight us?」

『Alright, what should I do. As far as I can see, I don't think that warrior kid from earlier would believe me even if I said I wasn't hostile. If that's the case, I think the correct option would be to be hostile.』

「.....That was rude of us. However, even if you say you want to be hostile, I don't want to fight against you. Our aim is to head for the Altar of Inheritance on the lowest floor. We don't intend to capture the dungeon.」

『Hou~. The Altar of Inheritance, a nostalgic name has come up. Do you know what it means?』

「That's a matter of course. That's why we've bothered to enter the dungeon.」

Rei looked around again while listening to the conversation between Elena and the voice.

Kuust looked around for the owner of the voice with sharp eyes. Ara just patiently waited for Elena's conversation to finish. And after turning to look at

the frightened Set, Vel understood how powerful the owner of the voice was. While waiting for the conversation to finish, Ara just looked towards Elena.

『Hmm, if that's the case, then I don't feel the need to be hostile. However, do you know why I'm talking directly in your head rather than showing myself to talk with you?』

「I understood that you have an actual self from the conversation. In regards to your intent, I haven't felt any hostility against us.」

『Young girl.....what if I had just hidden my hostility?』

「At that point, I could only say that my eye for people was not good enough.」

At Elena's reply, the voice in their heads suddenly laughed.

『Kukukukuku~. Hahahahaha. A person. I see, a person. No, it's been a long time since I've felt this happy. Fine, as a reward, I'll promise not to oppose you. So what's the second thing you wanted to ask?』

「No. The monsters in the dungeon are basically transferred here by the dungeon nucleus. At that time, I heard they undergo some sort of brainwashing. With those words, you won't oppose us.You're not a summoned monster are you?」

『Well, that is true. This dungeon has the right conditions for my research. I have made this space that could be called the reverse side of the dungeon space arbitrarily without permission.』

「.....Is that so. Although I can't tell what kind of existence you are, I am grateful if you don't fight this kingdom.」

『No no, you're really a girl with guts. I haven't spoken to a person for a long time but I really enjoyed it. That's right, it's not much but as a gift, I'll send you done to the next floor.』

Elena pricked her ears up at the sound of those words. Indeed, they had no map of the dungeon. Moreover, they were unwilling to explore the area where undead that never tired wandered around.

(If what the owner of this voice is saying is true, then we got lost in this back space after breaking out of the infinite loop.)

Since the small room where they had entered the infinite loop was not very far after they had gone down to the fifth floor, if they were thrown out of here,

they would have had to explore this floor from basically the beginning again.

「We would be very grateful.....it's a bit late, but may we know your name?」
『I believe that was two questions, well, that's enough. There's no particular problems if I do this. It will be nearly impossible for other people to come in after I return you to your original space and twist the spatial entrance. And even if someone came here, as I said earlier, the tools here are not a necessity. Because the stairs going down were made in front of the laboratory, if you take them, you will get to the sixth floor soon.』

The voice echoed in their heads as usual. Then, Rei and Elena suddenly realised that a stairway that didn't exist in the vicinity a few minutes before could now be seen at the entrance to the laboratory.

「This is.....」
『Didn't I say? It's a staircase down to the sixth floor. Oh, There's no need to worry about where you'll go. It's spatially connected to the normal exit of the sixth floor. You would be at the place you would normally arrive at after going down the stairs on this floor.』

「.....I will say thank you. Then, we'll be taking our leave.」
『What, don't worry about it. Thank you for entertaining me for the first time in a while. Then, farewell.』

「Please wait! I would like you to tell me your name if you don't mind. I am Elena Kerebel of Duke Kerebel's family of the Mireana Kingdom.」

『I'm sorry but I've already answered the questions you asked. I shall give my name if we have an opportunity to meet again.』

「.....Is that so, I'm afraid that can't be helped. Okay, everyone. Let's go.」

Following Elena's instructions, as Ara, Vel, Kuust and Rei followed her out of the laboratory.....the voice echoed again. At the same time, the movements of the people other than Rei and Set stopped.

『Sorry. I almost forgot. There's something I want to ask the person who brought the Griffon.』

TLN: Voice: Silly me, how could I forget the cliffhanger.

Chapter 93

As Rei was about to leave the laboratory of the mysterious existence that was without a doubt stronger than them, a voice sounded in Rei's mind, freezing Elena and the others.

『The person with the Griffon. There's something I want to hear from you.』
「.....What did you do to the others?」

Watching Vel, who had stopped moving forward with one leg stuck in the air, Rei judged that it had affected all four of them excluding Set and himself and asked the voice.

『What, I did that mainly so that can't hear what I want to know. Be at ease, I didn't paralyze them or anything, I just stopped time for them.』

TLN: ZA WARUDO!

「Stopped time?」

At those words, Rei asked involuntarily.

As he could see, their current location was a space made on the reverse side of the dungeon's space. The voice had also showed that he could use magic to manipulate the undead. On top of that, after showing that he could use space-time magic, as expected, Rei, who could only use fire magic, was stunned.

『It's nothing difficult. Well then, I want to hear about the Griffon that you are taking around.』

「An adventurer who can take a Griffon around is surely rare.....」

As soon as he answered, laughter echoed in Rei's mind.

『Hahaha~. There's nothing to hide. That Griffon, it isn't an ordinary monster is it?』

「.....What are you talking about?」

As expected, he took a moment to reply. That was enough for the voice.

『Hmm.Zepairu, are you familiar with that name?』

「.....」

To the voice's question, in which he had given Zepairu's name respectfully, Rei made up his mind.

Zepairu. It wasn't that he hadn't heard the name. On the contrary, it was because he knew it too well.

Yes. That was the name of the man that had drawn his soul to this world and given Rei this body when he died in Japan.

And if the contents of the book he read in the library was true, it was also the name of the world's greatest magician who had lived thousands of years ago.

Why did the owner of the voice ask that. Rei spoke up while thinking of that.

「Why do you know that name?」

『Kuku-, as expected.....ah. No, no, indeed, to see the Magic Beast Art in this era. No, it's excitingly thrilling. The girl from a while ago, she's a nice leader. Today is a day when exciting events have overlapped.』

(Do I know the Magic Beast Art, is it?)

In front of Rei's eyes, he could see Set trembling next to the wall.

Having the ability to make even Set scared and knowing the name of the Magic Beast Art as well. Facing that reality, Rei spoke out without thinking.

「Who.....are you?」

『Hmm, that's right. As long as you tell me who are, I won't be stingy with answering your questions.What will you do?』

As the voice echoed in his head, Rei thought about it.

(My true identity, should I reveal my origin to get information from the owner of this voice? For someone who built their laboratory in a dungeon, there's also the possibility of turning me into a experimental specimen.....isn't there? No, when I think about it, when he spoke Zepairu's name, he seemed to say it with a sense of respect and reverence. In that case, maybe there won't be any problems. Even if I have to fight the owner of this voice, I want to at least find out some information about him.)

Rei wanted to know more about Zepairu and himself, he also wanted to know as much information as he could about the other party that knew the name of

the Magic Beast Art, which had disappeared in a single generation. It was partially for his own defense, but also out of pure curiosity.

「All right. Because I'll say it, please answer properly as well.」

『Hmm, that is fine.』

Hearing the voice acknowledge his words, Rei spoke up. After coming to this world, it was the first time he had spoken about his identity.

「I was originally not born in this world. Unlike here, I was an ordinary person who was born and grew up in a world where there was no magic, dungeons or monsters. However, I died due to an accident. My soul should have normally disappeared, but I was drawn here by Zepairu.」

『.....When did that happen?』

「Less than several months ago.」

『What. Does that mean he has lived and survived for thousands of years?』

At the stunned voice, Rei shook his head.

「Not exactly, it's slightly different. Zepairu's own body seems to have decayed long ago. He had become a kind of spirit entity and had been looking for a soul with a wavelength matching his at the boundary of worlds. I was caught by him. So, as you know, the Magic Beast Art was lost after Zepairu's generation and he greatly regretted it. It is the reason he gave me this new body to be reborn in this world. And Set, the Griffon here, is a type of artificial life form created by the Magic Beast Art, as you speculated.」

To be exact, both Set and the Death Scythe were created by the Magic Beast Art. However, Rei judged that if the other party didn't notice anything, it wasn't necessary to lose this advantage and didn't mention it.

『Hmm, I see. Even his worthiness cannot live across thousands of years.』

To the owner of the muttering voice, Rei asked a question.

「Well then, I've told you about myself. I want you to tell me what you know next. What do you know about Zepairu who is known as a Majin?」

Rei asked so, but he already had his own expectations after talking with the owner of the voice so far. And the owner of the voice confirmed his predictions.

『Yes, a promise is a promise. First of all, the simple story is that I myself knew Zepairu-dono. I simply knew Zepairu-dono while he was still alive.』

Listening to those words, why wasn't he still convinced? The question came up in Rei's mind.

Rei had inherited Zepairu's knowledge, but he didn't recognise the the owner of this voice.

He looked at Rei's state and wondered what he was thinking about. The voice gave a quiet laugh.

『I knew Zepairu-dono, but Zepairu-dono probably didn't know me. I was merely someone from the same era, I just knew Zepairu-dono as he was decidedly the best mage in the world.』

(Indeed, it's like the one sided knowledge of an idol you see on TV.)

He nodded at the words of the voice and urged him to continue.

『In those days when Zepairu-dono was alive, there were more geniuses than you could imagine today. There is no doubt that if even one mage from that time was in this era, he would have the talent to be considered as an unprecedented great genius now. Thinking about it now, that era shone as the golden age for mages.』

「.....I see. You were one of those geniuses weren't you?」

『That's right. In this age, I would have had the talent to be considered a great genius as I had said earlier. But thinking about then, I was in the upper middle of the rest at best. Even though I knew Zepairu-dono's name, Zepairu-dono didn't know mine. Zepairu's group was formed from the geniuses out of geniuses, I was not talented to that degree.』

Though the voice muttered as if despising himself, the voice that echoed in Rei's head had a sense of nostalgia.

「So, you are still alive after living for thousands of years.....」

『Hmm, you've already guessed haven't you?』

Rei nodded at the voices words. He had talked with Elena and Vel about the possibility of such an existence in this dungeon.

「A Lich.」

『That is correct. As expected of the one chosen by Zepairu-dono, you're sharp. Yes, as I said earlier, I was a genius necromancer at the upper middle compared to the rest. I conducted a ceremony to reincarnate myself as a Lich.』

「.....A Lich that has survived thousands of years. At that stage, rather than calling you a Lich, you should be called a Lich Lord.」

『Hahaha~. A Lich Lord, that is nice. Shall I introduce myself next?』

Although laughter echoed in Rei's mind, actually surviving thousands of years while studying magic all the way. With his ability, he deserved to be called a Lich Lord without a doubt.

(No, rather than lord, he should be called the king of the dead, or even emperor. Lich King or Lich Emperor maybe more appropriate.)

While he thought of that, from nowhere, a crystal ball the size of a large fist softly floated in the air and into Rei's hands.

「This is?」

『It's a small present for the successor and inheritor of Zepairu-dono. It's a magic item in the form of a pair of orbs. If you speak into it, you are able to freely contact someone at the other orb.』

(Can I think of it as something like a cellphone? Any how, the fact that they don't exist was quite a problem.)

「If you give one to me, I won't refuse.....but why are you so kind?」

『As I said earlier, Zepairu-dono was someone so far ahead that his back couldn't even be seen by those following him. To be honest, even after studying for several thousands of years, I don't think I have caught up with him. Since I came across the successor to Zepairu-dono, I'd like to cherish that relationship.』

「A once in a lifetime's chance, is it」

『What's that?』

「It's a saying from my world. It means that an encounter is something that would only happen once in a lifetime, and should be cherished as such.」

『I see, those words match your and my situation exactly.A once in a lifetime's chance. Now let me see, it would be a discourtesy to not show you my

appearance after so long, I will appear now so don't you lose yourself.』

The owner of the voice gave a warning and then appeared in the air in front of Rei. And the moment the figure appeared in his sight, a large amount of cold sweat came from Rei's back.

Because he had been guaranteed by Zepairu, he had the confidence to say that his magic power was one of the best. But the moment he saw the being in front of him, Rei understood that he would lose consciousness if he relaxed himself for even an instant. Set had been scared as soon as he had heard the voice. It seemed to Rei that Set had instinctively known the existence before them.

He had the form of a simple Lich. A Skeleton wearing a robe with a magic wand grasped in his hand. His skull was covered with something like a crown. That was it. However, the moment he saw that figure, Rei only felt the concept of 『Death』.

『Mm? I'm sorry, maybe the stimulation was a bit too strong.How about this?』

After the Lich murmured, the sense of oppression felt from the existence before Rei's eyes gradually disappeared. And a few seconds later, Rei was at a level where he could move again.

『Hou~, you can move this much already. As expected of Zepairu-dono's successor.』

A praising voice sounded in Rei's mind, but Rei just smiled bitterly at that praise.

(Set is an A rank Griffon.So if you apply the monster rank to this Lich, would he be S rank? No, he wouldn't fit in that level.As expected of a Lich who has survived thousands of years.

『Let me greet you once more. I am the Lich you have been talking to since before.....no, I am Grimm, the Lich Lord. Thank you, you who have inherited Zepairu-dono's will.』

「I'm Rei.Although I am still learning, someday, I want to acquire the power that is appropriate for succeeding Zepairu's will.」

『Well then, don't forget to continue training from now on.』

From the Lich floating in front of him, Rei strangely couldn't feel any hostility towards him at all. No, rather it gave off an atmosphere that made him feel familiar. That could be understood by the admiration that the Lich, who introduced himself as Grimm, toward Zepairu.

And then, Grimm turned to look at Set, who was frightened but still anxiously watched Rei from the corner of the wall.

While trembling with fear as soon as he was looked at, Set still took one step forward to protect Rei, his favourite partner.

『Hou~, even though you're still young, you still confront me? It's splendid. Rei, as it was produced from your magic power, it's potential seems to be endless.However, even now, it's still a magic beast. In order to demonstrate it's real strength as a magic beast you will need to devote yourself to training for a while.If you continue growing as you are now, like the magic beast that Zepairu-dono produced from the Magic Beast Art, there will be a possibility of it growing into a magic beast that is capable of overwhelming the army of a single country by itself. The Magic Beast Art's greatest strength is the skills that can be acquired with growth. How strong will you be at our next meeting.....I am looking forward to it. Now then, I'm sorry for being rude but I'm actually busy with various things.』

Saying that, his body started to gradually fade.....and after a couple of second, the figure of Grimm could no longer be seen.

『Rei, Set and the girl I mentioned earlier. Today was full of good encounters. I will see you again if there is a chance.No, if anything happens you can contact me with the pair of orbs.』

He left with those words.

And the next moment after Grimm disappeared, Elena and the others, whose movements had stopped, resumed again.

「Rei, what is it? Elena-sama has told us all to go down to the next floor.」

Vel called out to Rei, who was staring at the place where Grimm had disappeared.

Rei pulled himself back together at that voice and stored the orb into the Misty Ring so that the others couldn't find it before hurrying to the stairs with Set.

.....And Elena, who was seriously pondering over something.

Chapter 94

They descended the stairs that the Lich Lord Grimm had made for about 10 minutes. The stairs were connected to the real stairs to the 6th floor by spatial magic, so the 6th floor was spread before them as natural.

「Uwa~, what the owner of the voice said was true. Twisting space to connect to this location.....hey, Kuust. I'm really glad we didn't fight the owner of the voice. What would have happened if you had lost your temper and destroyed that laboratory.....」

「.....」

Indeed, the sight before them was unreal, it caused Kuust to realise what a crazy monster the owner of the voice on the fifth floor had been. It was a Lich that had lived thousands of years.....no, they were lucky that they didn't know it was a Lich Lord, or maybe they were unlucky. Either way, Kuust was relieved at his good luck that he hadn't angered the owner of the voice.

「So, this is the sixth floor.....」

Elena's voice echoed into the surroundings.

The scene before them was an ordinary dungeon, similar to the first, second and fifth floor, which they had just come down from.

The walls shined lightly and the passages were wide enough for Set to fight freely. It wasn't a place filled with mushrooms or a forest but a place you would normally imagine a dungeon to be.

「That said, considering what has been inside this horrible dungeon, I don't think this is an ordinary place.」

At Vel's low murmur, everyone around him unconsciously nodded.

「Still, it's better than the putrid smell of Zombies on the floor above. My sense of smell will return to normal shortly.」

「.....I see, then Rei, Set, we will take a break here until Vel's nose can smell properly. Especially because Vel couldn't take a break after releasing the trap on door to the laboratory belonging to the owner of the voice. However, take

care to watch for any enemies that may come.」

「Eh?Really? Lucky.」

Vel let out a joyful voice at Elena's instructions. Rei and Set, who had come in direct contact with Grimm, didn't put on any expression in particular but sat down on the spot in relief.

Fortunately, the stairs were behind them and they judged that it wasn't likely for an ambush to occur compared to if they had taken a break in a passage.

「Finally, the sixth floor. If we clear this floor safely and go down to the seventh floor, the Altar of Inheritance will be there.....」

「Elena-sama?」

At Elena's mutterings to herself, Ara turned to look at her with a worried face.

But Elena shook her head, saying that it was nothing, before closing her eyes to recover her stamina.

「Alright, is everyone okay? We will start searching.」

Elena called out to everyone after taking a break for about an hour.

Everyone followed her voice and stood up from the stone pavement they were sitting on.

「Because there are no undead here, we will change the formation slightly. Vanguard is Ara and Kuust, Middle guard is me and Rei. Set and Vel will take the rearguard.」

「Alright, the vanguard. I will try hard for Elena-sama and crush the enemies with this Power Axe!」

「Is that so, I'm counting on you Ara.」

Replying to Ara with a smile, the others got into formation without saying anything in particular.

「Vel, I will ask you to check for traps. Honestly speaking, you can be excused from the mix up that led us into the back space.」

「Ah, oh well. Well, I didn't expect a monster like that to appear.」

「Nevertheless, you shouldn't be careless. Everyone should be more careful. If we break through this floor, it will be the lowest level. Our destination, the Altar

of Inheritance, is there.」

Everyone nodded at Elena's voice and earnestly began searching with a serious look, completely different from when they were taking a break a few minutes ago.

In that state, they moved forward from the stairs to the sixth floor and stepped into the dungeon of the sixth floor.

But.....

「Isn't this anticlimactic?」

Ara complained unhappily to Kuust beside her.

「Ara, I understand your feelings but don't be discouraged. You don't know when monsters will attack.」

Kuust reproved Ara as he watched the surroundings carefully, but Ara just shrugged her shoulders as she looked around.

「Even though it's been an hour since we first entered the sixth floor, why hasn't a single monster come out? There are no traps and only a few branching passages. What is there to watch for.」

Yes. Despite enthusiastically entering the sixth floor, as Ara had said, there had been no monster and no traps. There were only a few branching passages.

「.....Hey, could we possibly have entered an infinite loop again?」

At Ara's muttered remark, Vel shook his head at the rearguard.

「I'm not worried about that. For now, we have provisions for that. What do you think Rei?」

Maybe he understood from the floor above that Rei's senses were as good as his, Vel asked him for confirmation.

Rei was of a similar opinion to Vel and gave a small nod.

「That's right. It looks like a similar passage but it's subtly different. At the very least it's not like an infinite loop from the floor above.」

「Gurururu~」

Set gave a cry as to agree with Rei.

It seemed that though he had been frightened when they encountered Grimm about an hour ago, he had already recovered.

(.....This kind of resilience, or is it his curiosity.....hm?)

While thinking about Set's situation in his mind, he noticed that he had been staring at the person beside him. Next to Rei was Elena, and naturally, he had been staring at Elena.

「What's wrong?」

「.....No, nothing at all. I was just thinking about something.」

Those words were clearly brushing the question away, but he thought that Elena would be unlikely to pursue an answer as it would be strange.

They conversed as they advanced for another 20 minutes. Suddenly Set reacted with a twitch behind Rei.

Rei noticed about 10 seconds later, followed by Vel a few seconds after that.

「Thank to Ara wanting some to to come, it seems we have company.」

「.....Eh?」

「Monsters. About 4 from the front.....no, 5?」

「Everyone, prepare for battle. Vel, any from the rear?」

「There's no problems there for now.」

「Alright, then we will eliminate them at once.Ara, stop them!」

Elena immediately gave instructions to Ara in the vanguard. Ara, who admired Elena, moved forward with the Power Axe in hand to shield Elena without any hesitation.

That moment, a metallic kin~ sound echoed into the surroundings. Kuust thrust out his magic spear on reflex.

However, the magic spear that was thrust out in the short moment that the enemy attacked pierced the air instead of the enemy.

「Be careful, it's fast!」

As Kuust's voice echoed into the surroundings, everyone held their own weapon as they watched the enemy.

As the faint light from the dungeon walls illuminated the area, a huge wolf

appeared. Its height from feet to head was up to Rei's chest. From its upper jaw, deep green fangs stretched out like the extinct Sabertooth Tigers from Earth. And from its back, something like a tentacle grew on the left and right, making sharp sounds as they moved through the air. It was probably a blow from the tentacle that had attacked Ara.

As Vel said, 5 of such huge wolfs appeared, looking for openings as they observed Rei with their dark green eyes, a similar colour to their fangs.

Rei knew the monsters in front of them. As usual, they were in the monster encyclopedia.

「Emerald Wolf.....」

「Rei, do you know what they are? Please tell us.」

Elena asked while read to use her sword whip at any time. To that question, Rei answered so that everyone could hear as he held the Death Scythe.

「Emerald Wolf. It's a C rank monster but it usually lives in packs. In packs, they are B rank monsters. As for its strongest weapon.....rather than its fangs, watch out for the tentacles that extend from its back. You can treat them as something like a whip. It can manipulate its tentacles at will to attack the enemy and uses its fangs to finish off its target. In addition, their physical ability is high and they can use primitive wind magic.」

「.....I see, it's a rather annoying enemy.」

Listening to Rei's explanation, Ara held the Power Axe. The others also held their weapons, ready to attack at any time.

「Gaaaaaah~!」

The Emerald Wolves made the first strike. At the same time as that bark, a gust of wind blew, blinding Rei's eyes. He felt two killing intents.

「Haah!」

Responding quickly to the killing intent, Rei poured magic power into the Death Scythe as he swung it, making sure not to hit his surrounding party members.

「Gyan~!」

With a single strike, the Emerald Wolf that had jumped off a wall to attack Rei in a triangle jump was splendidly cut in two. However, only one was taken down, just one.....as he looked around, there used to be 5 at the front, but there were now only two. One was attracted by Rei's magic power and attacked him before being slashed back. The remaining two were behind Elena. They had probably jumped off the wall and past them when the Emerald Wolf that Rei slashed had blinded him. They faced Set and Vel.

「Vel can't fight a C rank monster in melee! Rei, swap with Vel and deal with the two at the back with Set. Vel, take the middle guard and support Rei with your bow. Ara, Kuust. We will clean up the two in the front.」

Following Elena's instructions, Rei and Vel swiftly changed their positions. Using the momentum from when they switched positions, he slashed an Emerald Wolf with the Death Scythe.....

「Gururu~!」

「Tch!」

Set gave a cry as he saw the tentacle attacking from Rei's blind spot. Rei immediately jumped next to Set to avoid the attack.

The two Emerald Wolves attacked Rei at the same time with their quick movements. But.....

「Gururururururu~!」

Their agility dropped by about 10% as Set used King's Awe.

「Elena-sama, Set used his cry. Because the speed of the Emerald Wolves has dropped, please take them out now!」

Using the Death Scythe to slash the tentacles, fending them off, Rei called out to Elena, who was using her sword whip to support Ara and Kuust.

「I see, his cry. Thanks. Vel, arrows should be hard for them to dodge now. Shoot!」

「OK!」

As soon as he replied to Elena, Vel took out several arrows from his quiver and continuously shot the Emerald Wolves.

At their original speed, they would have been able to avoid the arrows by moving away or by intercepting them with their tentacles. But with the drop in movement speed due to Set's King's Awe, it became difficult. They avoided the Power Axe, as Ara swung it down, and Kuust's magic spear as they leaped back to take some distance and focused on dodging the arrows. Perhaps the speed at which they made their judgement was what made them C rank monsters.

The Emerald Wolves facing Rei and Set also understood that their movements had been slowed and observed Rei as they took some distance.

(However, their hesitation is an opportunity we can use!)

Muttering in his mind, he kicked against the ground and closed the distance to the Emerald Wolf to the right.

「Set, you take the other one!」

「Gururu~!」

Set caught Rei's intention and gave a short cry before jumping towards the Emerald Wolf to the left.

「Ga.....Gaaaaaaa~!」

Although their movements were dulled, the Emerald Wolf was confused when Rei closed the distance without any hesitation but still tried to intercept him with its tentacle. But Rei's weapons was one huge scythe and it had two tentacles. In addition, they had a similar hardness to ordinary swords. The Emerald Wolf's judgement wasn't wrong.If the opponent was an ordinary adventurer, or if Rei wasn't wielding the Death Scythe. Any how, it weighed over 100kg and was swung with Rei's inhuman strength. Adding onto that, magic power was being poured into the Death Scythe making the blade sharp enough to easily cut through metal. Not knowing the existence that was Rei was the Emerald Wolf's greatest misfortune.

「Gyan~!」

One strike. With a single swing of the Death Scythe, the two tentacles, the Emerald Wolf's biggest weapons, were cut off.

It screamed from the pain that it usually wouldn't expect.....when it finally noticed, the blade of the Death Scythe was already right before its eyes. That

was the last thing the Emerald Wolf facing Rei saw in its life.

「Gaaaah~! !」

「Gururururu~!」

Rei cut off the head of the Emerald Wolf and took some distance to avoid the blood that spurted out from its neck. Looking at Set's direction, the fire breath from Set's mouth collided with the wind blades that the Emerald Wolf had shot out.....the wind blades were burned away by the raw power of the fire breath as the flames wrapped around the Emerald Wolf.

Set's Fire Breath wasn't at a very high level, only level 2. But it seemed that its power was still much stronger compared to the simple wind magic that the Emerald Wolf used.

And behind Rei, the tip of the sword whip pierced through the head of one of the Emerald Wolves, killing it. The last one was split in half, top and bottom, as Ara swung the Power Axe from the side in a cooperative attack with Kuust and Vel.

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「Phew, it seems we cleaned them up somehow.」

Elena swung her sword whip while sighing in relief, flicking the blood off the blade before sheathing it.

Looking around, all the Emerald Wolves which had attacked them were all dead.

One was the one she had pierced through the head, there was one Ara had split in half, one who's head was cut off by Rei and one which Set had burned up with Fire Breath. The one thing they all had in common with each other was that they were all no longer breathing.

「A battle cry, was it. If it wasn't for Set's skill, it wouldn't have been that easy to do all this.」

Originally, wolf type monsters focused more on speed and teamwork than on brute force. Set's cry, King's Awe, cut their speed by about 10%. 10%. Should be called 10% or only 10%. Which was the correct answer. It was obvious if you saw the scene before Elena.

Looking at her party members, she gave a small nod after seeing that everyone still had enough stamina.

She judged that it would be fine if they only took a break after going further down from the sixth floor.

They had only managed to beat the Emerald Wolves that attacked them without much of a struggle thanks to Set. At the same time, it let Elena feel the strength that Rei and Set provided.

(No, now's not the time to think about other things. I have to find the stairs to the lowest layer as soon as possible. For whatever reason, Rei is my.....no, our ally. That's fine then.)

Shaking her head slightly, she shook off her strange thoughts and brushed her shiny golden hair that had been messed up in battle.

「Rei, collect the monsters. Once that's done, we will continue searching immediately.」

「Yes, I understand.」

Following Elena's instructions, he stored the corpses of the slain Emerald Wolves into the Misty Ring.

Though the fur of the one burned to death by Set's Fire Breath couldn't be used, other parts such as the magic stone, meat and fangs could still be recovered.

「Right, Set. You did well. Aside from the fur, everything else is usable.」

「Gururu~」

Having his head stroked, Set gave a happy cry.

Because he understood that Rei would be pleased with him if there were more usable monster materials, so instead of usual, he slightly changed the locations he burned to not burn the meat and bones. Set was very happy because he was praised by his favourite, Rei, knowing that he had done well.

After a few minutes, all the Emerald Wolves had most of their blood drained and stored into the Misty Ring and their exploration of the sixth floor resumed.

「Ara, don't say anything unnecessary. It feels like we get into a pinch every time you mutter something.」

「Wait a moment, that's an exaggeration right!? The timing just happens to overlap as I speak.」

Kuust and Ara's argument.....or rather joking conversation, carried on as they continued through the dungeon. And.....

「Oh, stop. It's a pit trap.」

Vel stopped everyone and turned to look at the passage in front of them.

「Well, there's no need to disarm it. There's no indication that it's a linked trapped either so there's no problems if we trigger the pitfall with something appropriate. Rei, do you have anything in your item box? It fine as long as it's size and weight are suitable.」

「Please wait a moment.」

Following Vel's request, Rei displayed the list of items in the Misty Ring in his mind.

(Because the spears are used for throwing, they're no good. As for other weapons..... that said, there's the broken sword that Ara used.)

Remember the long sword he had taken from Claws of the Hawk, he selected it from the list in his mind and passed the long sword that didn't seem to be usable anymore to Vel.

「Here, this is fine.」

「Oh, it feels a bit light. I wonder if the pit trap will trigger. No, should I just throw it harder?」

「Rei-dono, that's a bit.....」

Vel was troubled at first but immediately nodded and took the long sword.

Wondering what was the origin of the long sword that was passed over, Ara soon noticed that it had been the one she had used. It was no wonder as the long sword had become useless due to her immaturity. As Ara muttered somewhat reluctantly, Vel looked towards her interestingly and smiled.

「I see, by the way, is this the long sword that Ara borrowed? Well, it wasn't able to withstand Ara's abuse.」

「.....Vel, what if you were substituted as the sacrifice to trigger the pit trap instead of the long sword, what would you do?」

「Ah, ahahahahaha. It's a joke, a joke. But, anyhow, isn't this long sword only good for being thrown at the enemy? So I don't think it's wrong to use this opportunity.」

「.....I understand.」

After Ara was reluctantly convinced, Vel skillfully threw the sword to the target location.

Although not as fast as throwing a dagger, nevertheless, the sword still had considerable power as it hit the ground.....opening a hole about 2m in diameter in the floor.

「It was wider than I expected.」

While muttering, Vel looked into the pit trap while unconsciously frowning.

「Uwa~, that's nasty.」

Before Vel's eyes, at the bottom of the pit trap were countless sharp metal spikes, about a meter tall each.

If they had fallen into this pit trap, if they weren't equipped with any magic items to boost the defensive power of their armour, they would have been pierced by the spikes from the soles of their feet.

Maybe imagining the situation, Elena frowned her eyes unpleasantly.

「For now, it's a good thing that this was an obvious trap.」

Vel said. However, the pit traps themselves were fairly cleverly hidden so there was probably a possibility that someone would have been caught in it if Vel wasn't here.

(Well, I can usually find these types of traps if I used 『Thin Flame』.)

In Rei's mind, he thought of the magic he had used to get out of the infinite looping space. 『Thin Flame』 was a magic for exploration, if he was alone in the dungeon.....no, with Set, it was an indispensable magic.

However, even with 『Thin Flame』, he could only explore the walls, walls and ceiling. If a trap trigger was placed somewhere else, such as floating in the air, it would be impossible to detect.

「If the pit trap is left open like this, it will be easy to find even if someone comes later.Unless a monster repairs it.」

He nodded at Elena's mutters before the party resumed their search.

After that, other monsters appeared such as Goblins and Fang Wolves, which they had beaten before. Some small fry monsters also appeared with a reasonable frequency. But.....

「Stop. I found a hidden switch in the floor ahead.」

「Again!? The person who made this dungeon is completely twisted!」

「Come on, the thing making the dungeon isn't a person, it's the dungeon nucleus. No, well, because of that, I have to agree with you that it's personality is twisted.」

「.....Vel, show me where the switch is located.」

Kuust urged Vel while amazed at the exchange between Ara and Vel.

Several hours passed since they found the first pit trap. Although the monsters that came out were mostly small fry, with the exception of the Emerald Wolves which came out at the beginning, traps were placed everywhere instead.

Initially, Elena wanted to move forward after disarming each trap, but as they had to take a lot of time to disarm traps that were likely to trigger a chain of traps, rather than disarming each one, they bypassed the ones they could.

The switch Vel found this time was the same colour as the floor and was only raised slightly. It was skillfully hidden enough that there was a high risk of someone triggering the trap if they didn't know there was a switch there.

「Since there doesn't seem to be any other traps around that switch, I think we can proceed by just avoiding stepping on that switch.」

Following Vel's opinion, they went forward and avoided stepping on the switch. Moving ahead, what appeared next was a crossroad. As seen from the passage Elena was in, there were three paths, left, right and center.

「Well then, what to do? Well, we have no map so we have to rely on intuition anyway.....no.」

Kunu~, sniffing, Vel turned his eyes to the right.

Rei also sniffed the smell Vel had noticed. It goes without saying that both their senses of smell were much sharper than the others.

「The road to the right smells of beasts. I'm pretty sure there's some sort of monster there.」

「In that case, left or center.....Rei, you say.」

「Me again?」

「Because there are no guidelines anyway, in that case, it would be better to rely on the intuition of an adventurer who has entered a dungeon.」

「.....No, this is the first time I've entered a dungeon.」

That said, it was also true that there were no guidelines that they could follow. In the end, it was necessary to decide the way forward one way or another.

He turned his eyes to the front, then to the left.

Both walls glowed gently and nothing could be seen beyond a few meters. In that situation, Rei chose.....

「Well, left.」

Almost instinctively, he chose left.

「Well then, let's move on. But before that, we'll change the formation. Apparently this floor seems to have more traps than monsters. So Ara and Vel will swap. Vel will take the vanguard. Ara will move back to defend against surprise attacks. Vel please focus on finding traps.」

The single file formation changed according to Elena's instructions before going down the left passage indicated by Rei.

.....And in less than 10 minutes, they found another trap.

Apparently, Vel felt that this one was linked to other traps. While disarming the trap, everyone rested while watching out for attacks.

「But with this, won't the monsters in the dungeon get caught in the traps? 」
「I guess that knowledge is given to the monsters when the dungeon nucleus summons them.No, even if you taught monsters the existence of traps, I doubt whether Goblins can remember that or not. In that case, it's natural to think that the traps probably don't respond to monsters.」

「.....Isn't that a bit unfair?」

「No, don't tell me. If you want to complain, please tell the monsters instead of me.」

Vel disarmed the trap while talking with Ara and they moved on with the usual interaction. And again.....

「Okay, stop. I found a trap.」

「Where is it?」

To Kuust's question, which he had become tired of, Vel looked at the floor about 5m ahead.

「.....I can't see anything that looks like a switch?」

He turned to look in the direction Vel was indicating, but in Kuust's eyes, it

looked like an ordinary passage.

But Vel nodded naturally in response.

「That's right. There's no switch, the passage itself is the trigger to activate the trap. When you step into the passage ahead, that is the trigger.Probably.」

Different from up to now, Vel muttered somewhat unsure.

「What's going on? You're not the same as usual.」

No, it seems quite sophisticated. I don't know if I can completely disarm it or not.」

「.....Then what do we do? Should we go back to the crossroad and go down a different passage?」

At Kuust's words, he shook his head slightly while looking around at everyone else.

「It's better to disarm it. It's highly likely that the same trap is set up in the remaining two passages due to the structure of the dungeon. I think it would be better disarm this trap somehow and then proceed instead of going back and wasting time.」

「But isn't it only Vel's intuition that there are traps set in the other passages? Then it's worth a shot.....」

「Kuust, I'm not just basing it off my intuition. I guessed based on the location and timing of traps that I've noticed up to this point on this level so far. That's right. This way of saying it is a bit blunt, but if we can't disarm this trap, it means we have no qualifications to go further.....」

Vel thought as he replied to Kuust.

Looking at the two people, Elena made her decision.

「That's right. It's Vel's opinion after releasing all the traps he's seen so far. It's worth listening to.Vel, is it possible to disarm this trap?」

「If I do it carefully, I'll manage somehow. It will be impossible to disarm it quickly like before.」

「.....I understand. The make sure you disarm it even if you have to take your time. Also, since I don't know what's ahead, one person stay on guard while everyone else takes a break to restore your stamina. That said, because Set is

here, you don't have to focus too hard. First watch is Rei, I'll leave it to you.」
「I understand.」

Nodding at Elena's words, Rei stayed on guard, ready to respond with Set if anything happened.

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「Alright, disarming complete.」

Vel declared that about an hour after he started to disarm the trap.

The watch had already changed from Rei to Ara and from Ara to Kuust. When it was time for Elena to take the watch, Vel's voice sounded out.

「It's been hard on you. You took some time to disarm the trap so take a short break. If we encounter enemies if we moved forward now, it would be bad for you.」

「As expected of the princess. You understand your subordinates well.」

He had been concentrating hard on disarming the trap. As he was quite tired, he muttered quietly as he leaned against the gently glowing dungeon walls.

While smiling wryly at Vel's appearance, Elena took over the watch from Kuust.

「It's been hard on you.」

「Ah yeah. Well, my job is my job. However, there have been many places since we entered the dungeon that needed me to do something.....I mean, I feel like it's too much.」

With a bitter smile, Vel took out a bottle of water from his waist pouch and held it out to Kuust.

「Sorry about this.」

Kuust brought the bottle to his mouth as he gave a wry smile back.

「Indeed, both of you are lazy.」

「.....You, you're not exhausting your stamina because of the effect of that magic item.」

At Ara's slightly teasing tone, Vel turned to glared at her. It was Ara's payback for being teased all the time.

While watching the interaction of the three people, Rei lay down on floor and leaned against Set, who was watching the surroundings, and stroked his back.

「Well then, we should restart our search soon.」

Elena declared so after Vel had rested for about 30 minutes.

At those words, everyone nodded and stood up, readying their weapons.

「Vel, I'll be burdening you a bit more, but please.」

「Yes, yes, leave that to me. I will do my best for the remaining floor.」

「I'll leave it to you. There will be no change in the formation. So let's go.」

The vanguard was Vel and Kuust. The middle guard was Rei and Elena and the rear guard was Ara and Set as they advanced through the passage where the trap had been disarmed.

「Hey, Vel. By the way, what kind of trap did you disarm in the end?」

While advancing down the passage, Ara asked Vel.

While keeping a sharp eye on the surroundings to check whether there were traps or not, Vel replied in a light tone.

「You want to know? Well, in that case, I could teach you about it.」

「.....What, that kind of feeling. Was it such a terrible trap?」

「Should I call it amazing or horrific. To be short, it was a trap that collapsed the ceiling as soon as you stepped into the passage.」

「Wait a moment, what's with that. It shouldn't be possible to avoid that.」

Ara walked along the passage with a stunned look, but Kuust interrupted there.

「Say, if the ceiling collapses here, won't the floor of the fifth floor collapse as well?」

「I wonder. I don't know the area around here but isn't it a dungeon with forests and rivers flowing inside? Even if the ceiling collapses here, if there was no effect on the floor above, I wouldn't be surprised.」

「.....Certainly.」

Kuust was reminded of the many unreasonable events that had occurred so far and unexpectedly agreed.

As they talked like that, 30 minutes passed as they explored the passage. Strangely, they had come this far with a sense of doubt as they hadn't found a

single trap.

「After all this.....what Vel said earlier might be correct.」

Although they hadn't found any traps, as it was unknown when monster would attack, Elena held her sword whip in her hand as she muttered.

「Is it about the possibility that the trap a while back was a trial?」

Rei answered Elena while holding the Death Scythe, ready to use it at any time.

「Ah. Thinking about the number of traps since we entered this floor, the trap before might have been like the final exam.」

「.....Elena-sama, you might be right.」

Vel, who heard the conversation between Elena and Rei, unintentionally muttered as he discovered a strange object in his sight.

The thing that Vel saw at the end of his line of sight was a huge door about 5m tall. It was a double door and an intimidating Giant wielding a huge club was carved into it.

「What is this, I only have bad feelings after seeing that door.」

At Vel's tired voice, Rei went forward with a wry smile.

「I know what you mean, but if you don't open the door, the other option is not entering that room and going back to the crossroads before.」

「I guess. There will definitely be a door like this on the other two passages.....it can't be helped, are you ready?」

Slapping both cheeks to fire himself up, he went to check the door at once.....after a few minutes, he shrugged his shoulders and declared.

「There's no trap. In the end, it seems that the previous one was the last one.」
「Alright. Let's go in as soon as we can. Because we don't know what's inside, don't let your guard down.」

Everyone nodded at Elena's words. Vel, as the responsibility of the thief, opened the door with the carving of the Giant.

And inside.....

「A Goblin, is it?」

Rei muttered unintentionally.

Yes. The room that the door opened to could be called vast. As Rei looked around, it looked like the room was about 500 square meters.

And in that vast room, in a corner was a presence about the height of Rei's waist with green skin and an ugly face.

Although it was a figure that could normally only be judged as a Goblin, for some reason, Rei's chest had a sense of incongruity when he called it a Goblin.

(At the end of a door with a figure of a Giant carved into it is a Goblin? Is that even possible? As far as this dungeon's benevolence is concerned, I don't think it would prepare such a simple enemy.....)

While Rei thought that in his mind, the Goblin in the room rushed towards Rei with its club.

Seeing that, they were amazed. The two vanguards, Kuust and Vel, took a step forward.

「Elena-sama, we are enough for the likes of a Goblin.」

「.....I feel something strange.....well, if it's Kuust, he should be more than enough to deal with a Goblin.」

While having the same sense of incongruity as Rei, Vel pulled out his bow to support Kuust, who went forward.

(Inside the Giant's door is a Goblin.....Wait. Giant? Goblin? If I remember correctly from the monster encyclopedia.....Spriggan!?)

As the Rei's chain of thoughts lead him to the answer, he quickly cried out.

「The enemy isn't a Goblin, it's a Spriggan!」

Elena, who was next to Rei, was the first to react to his voice. She went forward with her sword whip.

At the same time, even though she didn't understand why, seeing Elena head to the front line was enough for Ara to follow.

And when Elena and the rest entered inside, the huge door automatically

closed as if someone was watching. But Elena and the rest of the party, who were focusing on the Spriggan, didn't notice it at all.

「Kuust, fall back!」

Elena shouted at Kuust, who was holding his spear towards the approaching enemy. However, her words were a few seconds too late.

Originally, the Goblin was supposed to be only up to Rei's waist in height. A green wall suddenly spread in front of Kuust, who had tried to stab out with his magic spear.

No, it wasn't a wall. It was a gigantic figure 6m tall.

Spriggan. In its normal form, it was easy to mistake it for a Goblin. But when it fought, it would reveal its true nature as a Giant. It was a monster with two figures, a giant and an ugly midget. It was a kind of Giant, but it was an extremely heinous and ferocious monster that like to eat the flesh of humans or creatures with low intelligence. It was a B rank monster. It was a monster at the same level as the Orc King that Rei had defeated in the Orc village.

In terms of liking human flesh and its ferocity, it was similar to the Ogre that Rei and Set had fought on the fourth floor. But unlike Ogres, it had a certain degree of cunning, which was worrying. Still, it was a relief for Elena that it couldn't use magic like the high ranking Giants.

TLN: I'm thinking of two things here, firstly, Kirito's Spriggan wasn't a Spriggan. Secondly, Ogre Magi and multicast.

「GAAaaaA~!」

Due to influence from the Spriggan itself becoming huge, the club in it's hand also became huge. Unlike the tree that the Ogre had directly pulled out from the ground, the tip had been worked on heavily to cause great damage on hitting the enemy. The club swung down towards Kuust.....

Gakin~!

Elena swung her sword whip and it stretched out like a whip, striking the tip of the club, forcibly changing its trajectory before it had swung down.

「Tch!」

Kuust instantly recovered his senses and jumped back and Vel shot arrows at the Spriggan to support Kuust at the same time. But.....

「You're kidding!? What kind of skin does it have that arrows can't penetrate!」

Because his mark was big, Vel shot 5 arrows at once. All of them hit the body of the Spriggan but they all fell to the floor without even injuring its skin.

「Don't aim for its body, aim for its face! If you hit its eyes or mouth, you should be able to hurt it!」

While holding the Death Scythe, Rei shouted as he ran past Vel. Naturally, Set followed beside him.

「GAAaaa~!」

Contrary to Kuust, who fell back, Rei and Set thrust themselves forward. And a short distance away from Rei, the Spriggan noticed Ara moving towards it and gave a frustrated roar as it raised its large club.

「Ara, I will attract its attention so aim for its feet! With your strength and the Power Axe, you should be able to hurt the Spriggan!」

「I understand!」

Shouting to Ara, Rei swung his large Death Scythe at the Spriggan.

「Flying Slash!」

With that word, a flying slash was released, putting a big scar on the chest of the Spriggan, who was swinging down its club at that moment.

But.....

「Tch, it's shallow!」

Unlike the arrows that Vel shot, the flying slash from the Death Scythe certainly scratched the Spriggan. There was a big scratch where the slash had hit. However, although the wound was large, in the end, it was an attack that didn't reach the bone, only cutting the skin and some flesh.

The Spriggan also didn't care about such degree of injuries.....but, it still swung down the huge club it raised at Rei, who had injured it.

「GURURURURURU~!」

Set activated King's Awe against the Spriggan. Rei avoided the slowed attack by jumping to the side before jumping onto the upper part of the club that had been swung down. He then ran up its arm, swinging the Death Scythe at the neck of the Spriggan. But.....

「GAAAaaa~!」

The Spriggan instinctively guessed how much power Rei's attack with the Death Scythe had and use its left arm, the one without the club, to shield its neck. Its left hand was cut off from the wrist and it raised a roar of pain.

「Tch, if you were an Ogre, you would have died from this attack!」

Recalling the figure of the Ogre which he had fought on the fourth floor for a moment. He kicked the shoulder of the Spriggan to get away from its range of attack.

Losing its wrist, the Spriggan tried to hit Rei by swinging its left arm, which was spewing blood. However, Elena's sword whip quickly extended out. It drew a complex trajectory, like a snake dancing through the air, as its tip stabbed into the chest of the Spriggan, which Vel's arrows couldn't even pierce.

That moment. The moment it stopped unexpectedly due to that blow, Elena's voice echoed out.

「Ara!」

Following that voice, Ara, who had moved unnoticed to the Spriggan's feet, raised the Power Axe in her hands.....and swung it down at the left foot of the Spriggan!

Ara's great strength and the Power Axe, which was a magic item. The attack with both effects shown was swung down on the Spriggan's left foot, exactly at the ankle, successfully cleaving through it.

「GAAAAaaa~!」

While screaming, the Spriggan fell to its knees without being able to stand up after losing a foot.

「Alright! Now's the time, follow up!」

Following Elena's order, everyone attacked the Spriggan at the same time.

Rei swung the Death Scyth, Elena used her sword whip, Ara swung the Power Axe, Kuust thrust his magic spear with a water spell causing damage to accumulate on the body of the Spriggan and Vel shot several arrows at the head of the Spriggan.

「GURURURURURU~!」

And with a strike from the sky from Set, the Spriggan's life was ended and the Giant fell to the ground.

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In front of them was a Spriggan, a type of Giant that was over 6m tall.

Even though a Spriggan was a B rank monster, it fought head on and without technique and was defeated by the combined strength of Elena, Rei and the others, its body currently lying in this large room.

「Elena-sama, look!」

Glancing away from the Spriggan, Ara, who was looking around the room, pointed at a location.

There was a staircase that went down that didn't exist before they had fought the Spriggan.

「I see. When the Spriggan that was protecting this room was defeated, the staircase to the next floor will appear.」

As Elena nodded, beside her, Vel looked to be thinking about something with a troubled face.

「Vel?」

「Ah, nothing. Nothing at all. But just before, if we had gone down one of the other two paths at the crossroads similar to this one, I was just a little bit concerned if there would be so called boss rooms and if stairs would have appeared after defeating the monsters there.」

「I see, as far as I can see from this room, that is probably the case. However, that is only a guess. I can't say for sure unless we actually went down the other passages at the crossroads.」

Ara tilted her head as she looked at Rei, who was recovering the corpse of the Spriggan.

「But Elena-sama, since there is information about the Altar of Inheritance, doesn't that mean that there was a party that reached the lowest floor? If that was so, if we went to the room where they had defeated the monster, wouldn't the stairs be there right away?」

To that question, Vel answered instead of Elena.

「No, I think the dungeon nucleus will probably summon a new monster when the one defending the staircase is defeated. Whether it will be summoned after a few hours or whether several days are necessary, I do not know.」

「Even for the dungeon nucleus, if it's not weak monsters like Goblins, some time is probably necessary to summon a B rank monster like a Spriggan.....I would hope. When we come back to this level after finishing the ritual at the Altar of Inheritance, it wouldn't be funny if we had to fight another monster the same rank as a Spriggan again.」

「At the very least, there would only be one. Imagine if there was a pack like the Emerald Wolves.」

Yes. Even if it was a B rank monster, although it may be troublesome for Elena and the others to fight, there was only one. It wasn't an enemy with the strength to make them despair.

In the first place, Rei had the experience of killing an equal ranked Orc King just by himself and Set was an A rank monster. There was also Elena, the General Princess, who had fighting strength close to his.

「Elena-sama, the Spriggan has been collected.」

Elena had been looking at Rei when he turned around and called out to her, surprising her.

For some reason, she felt as though the inside of her head turned pure white for a moment when her eyes met Rei's.

However, it was just a moment. Elena soon started thinking of things calmly as usual as she looked at the stairs down to the lowest floor.

(If we go down the staircase, it will be the lowest floor. It's just a little bit more to the Altar of Inheritance.....considering our exhausted stamina, we should spend the night here to restore our physical strength and magic power. Anyhow, a rank B monster appeared on the sixth floor. What type of monsters will there be on the lowest floor.....)

Thinking to herself, she turned to look at Vel.

(Besides, Vel has released a considerable amount of traps on this floor.

Although we've taken some breaks, it would still be better to take a rest. Vel has the physique of a thief, if he fails to disarm a trap properly due to mental fatigue, all the trouble we've taken to get here would come to naught.)

Putting those ideas together in her head in a few seconds, she told everyone, including Rei, to come over.

「We will spend tonight in this room, we will go down to the lowest floor tomorrow morning. Fortunately, we only have to watch for enemies coming up the stairs from the lowest floor since that huge door has closed. As for the watch, you won't be as busy as that time in the forest. As Vel said a while ago, a high ranked monster to replace the Spriggan we defeated probably won't be summoned soon. However, you shouldn't let your guard down, if there are any signs of one being summoned, wake the rest up.」

「In that case, will we defeat the monster that was resummoned?」

Elena shook her head slightly at Kuust's question.

「I can't say, it depends on the summoned monster. If it's an enemy that we can easily sweep away, we'll do that then keep resting until tomorrow morning. However, if not, if a B rank monster like a Spriggan is summoned, we will go down to the lowest level as we wouldn't be able to rest here.」

「That is so, that's fine then.」

Kuust nodded in understanding and Elena turned to Rei.

「Rei, please prepare for camping here tonight at once. As I said before, we won't use tents or sleeping bags so that we can act quickly if any trouble occurs. The only things we need are food and blankets for resting.」

「I understand. Please wait a moment.」

Expanding the list of items in the Misty Ring in his mind, he took out blankets, drinks and food.

Food was a potage soup and a large amount of sandwiches. Since everyone was hungry with everything they had done, they reached out for one after the other, bringing them to their mouths.

Still, they didn't wolf it all down, as expected of people of nobility.

「Gururu~」

Me as well, Set seemed to say as he rubbed his head against Rei. Rei gave him some sandwiches for the time being as he displayed the list of items in the Misty Ring in his mind.

「As expected, all the monsters I roasted for Set have all been eaten.....Set, you can have the food for monsters that were sold in downtown right away, it will take a bit of time to roast monsters now. Which one do you want to eat?」
「Gurururu~」

Chira~, Set turned to look at the blood that the Spriggan had shed.

「I see, you want the delicious food as expected.」

The meals for monsters that were sold in the city streets were basically like dog food. Even though it depended on the type of monster, Set didn't like it that much.

Even though Set understood that it would take some time, it was within Rei's expectations that he would chose the delicious food.

Anyhow, as he had eaten a few sandwiches, he was fine with not eating anything immediately.

「Well then, what should we do.....oh, ah, there's the Ogre's right arm.」

While muttering, Rei took out the huge right arm of the Ogre that he had defeated on the fourth floor.

Peeling the skin, which could be sold as material, off the right arm with the Mithril Knife, he cut it into large chunks.

「.....Rei, can I ask a question?」

Elena, who was watching Rei cut up the Ogre's right arm, suddenly called out to him.

「Yes, is there anything?」

「Even if you said you're going to cook, what about the fire? No, I know that Rei is good at fire magic, but it would still be hard without firewood.」

「Ah, that's fine. When I went into a forest for a guild request before, I noticed some dry wood and stored it into the item box in case of emergencies.」

While answering Elena, he took out some dry firewood from the Misty Ring,

grasped the Death Scythe and cast a spell.

『Fire, gather on my fingertips.....Small Flame』

As he cast the spell, a small flame glowed at the tip of Rei's index finger as he used it to light the firewood. Then, as the fire gradually became bigger, he pierced the meat chunks onto sharp sticks and used some branches to assemble something like a table to support the meat skewers.

「Gururu~」

Set gave a cry as he began to smell the meat being quickly roasted. Rei lightly seasoned it with salt after cutting away the burnt parts and put it on a plate to give to Set.

「.....Now then, first of all, tonight's watch. The order will be me, Ara, Kuust, Vel then Rei.」

Turning his eyes to look at Set for an instant as Rei heard Elena's instructions, after seeing that there were no objections, it became free time.

Ara talked to Elena while Rei roasted more Ogre meat for Set to eat.

While watching watching Elena and Rei, Kuust gently frowned his eyebrows as he drank some water from the bottle Vel gave him.

「Good grief, you are so obstinate.Hey, eat this.」

Kuust spoke up as he received some dried meat from Vel.

「I haven't said anything yet.」

「Your eyes say more than your mouth. You understand the main points right Kuust? Without Rei and Set, we probably wouldn't have gotten here safely.」

「.....I will admit that. But he's also influenced Elena-sama.....moreover, he's had an adverse effect on her. Vel, haven't you noticed? Since we came down from the fifth floor to the sixth floor, Elena-sama has been paying a lot more attention to him. It's quite apparent that the owner of the voice had something to do with it.」

「The owner of the voice.Well, indeed our princess has been behaving slightly strangely since we got to the sixth floor.....but I think it's only natural that she paying attention to Rei because she's concerned about him.」

「Haa. You are really comfortable and easy going. I would like to have some of your optimism.」

「Don't say that. Hey, eat this. And go to sleep quickly when you're full. Tomorrow is finally the lowest level, it will be troublesome if you're burdened because of some strange reason right?」

Kuust received a small bottle from Vel, inside were some shallow fried fruits, a simple kind of snack.

「This is?」

「It's my special snack. It's not like what a noble eats but it's not a problem in such a place.」

「.....Only snacks, there's no alcohol is there.」

「I think you will be scolded by the princess if you drink alcohol while camping in the dungeon at night.」

「I've said this before, how many times have I told you not to call her princess.....」

While talking in such a way, eventually one, then two more people went to sleep. Set was still eating the Ogre meat as Elena took the first watch. Along with Rei, they were the only people still awake.

「Gurururu~」

After Set finished eating all the meat that had been roasted on the campfire, Set gave a satisfied cry and moved somewhere a bit further away before lying down and closing his eyes.

Seeing Set off, Rei stood up after cleaning up all the food.....

「Rei, are you okay?」

Elena, who had been watching him since a while before, spoke up.

「Yes? I don't mind but.....do you want something light to eat?」

「No, if you don't mind, I'd like to talk for a bit. Of course you can refuse if you're too tired.」

Thinking for a couple of seconds, Rei sat down again before the campfire. While watching, Elena spoke up with a smile on her face.

「Rei, to be honest, I wouldn't have been able to come this far if you weren't here.」

「Well, normally I should be humble here.....it's quiet, don't you think?」

Hearing those words, Elena gave a wry smile.

「You.....actually, it's fine even you don't speak to me in formal language?」

「Well, it's not that different is it. Anyhow, with just master and me.....no, with just me, my master and Set, I only know about formal speech from books.」

「I see. You still talk with Vel and Ara in your usual way though.」

「That's right. I wasn't brought up speaking formally as normal.」

「.....Hmm, that's true. Thank you for your painstaking efforts so far. For non formal locations, I hope you don't mind speaking with me in a casual tone.」

Elena told him as the campfire crackled and the flames bounced around.

As the surrounding walls glowed gently, the light from the campfire illuminated Elena and Rei.

「Is that okay?」

「It's fine. Ordinary nobles will be strict with this, but as you know, I'm different from an ordinary noble.」

「Well, certainly, daughters of nobles usually don't do things like coming out to the battlefield.」

「I've told you not to use formal speech.」

「Pardon me.No, I'm sorry. Is that okay?」

「That's fine, I appreciate it if you could treat me with that kind of attitude.」

「Although you're a noblewoman, you're not good with honourifics.....is that fine?」

Elena smiled wryly at Rei's question.

「Not all nobles are that formal, look at my guards. Kuust aside, Ara and Vel dislike dealing with those things.」

「.....What? Although it was obvious that Kuust was a noble, Ara and Kuust are as well?」

「Ah. Ara is the third daughter of a Countess and Vel is the second son of a Viscount.」

「Indeed, that was surprising.....」

In this way, as the light of the campfire illuminated them vaguely, Rei and Elena continued the conversation between the two of them for another hour.....soon, Rei stood up from the campfire.

「Well then, I'm going to sleep soon. We will finally be at the lowest floor tomorrow. I don't want to think about starting while still tired.」

「I see.That's right. Certainly Rei was more active than anyone else today. You did well.」

「Ah, then goodnight.」

Saying that, Rei started to move away from the campfire.....

「Rei!」

Suddenly, from behind, he was called with a strong tone.

「What's wrong?」

「That is, today's.....no, it's nothing. I just wanted to say I'll be relying on you tomorrow.」

「? Well, naturally, I don't intend to do a lousy job.」

Glancing at Elena's face with a puzzled look, he wrapped the blanket around himself to finally rest.

(Rei.....I, you.....no, I'm a bit regretful.)

TLN: I couldn't translate this sentence too well but the regret here refers to lingering affection kind of regret.

Elena shook her head slightly.

In this way, the day before they went to the lowest floor passed.

Chapter 98

「Everyone is ready. Then we will enter the lowest level immediately. No one should let their guard down.」

The next day, Elena called out to everyone to ready themselves to go to the last level after they finished their meal.

Hearing their orders to go down the stairs in front of them, to the level where their objective was, they all had serious expressions.

「The formation is the same as yesterday. Vel and Kuust in the vanguard. Middle guard is Rei and me. Rear guard is Ara and Set.」

「Do you have a moment?」

It was Rei who asked Elena.

Kuust's frowned his eyes slightly at the slightly impolite words but kept silent without saying anything.

There had been an incident during breakfast over how Rei spoke to Elena, however, further problems were avoided after Elena said that she had allowed Rei to do so. If Elena hadn't said that, a death match between Kuust and Rei would probably have happened by now.

「Yes?」

「I would like to go to the rear guard, is that okay?」

「Reason?」

「I understand that Ara is cautious of surprise attacks, but I can definitely cooperate better with Set if we are actually ambushed.」

She thought that those words were reasonable. After thinking for a few seconds, she nodded.

「There's nothing Ara can do in the middle guard.....that's right, Vel and Ara in the vanguard. Kuust with me in the middle guard. Rei and Set in the rear guard. Any objections?」

Seeing that no one had any objections in particular, Elena gave a small nod

and turned to the stairs to the lowest level.

「Alright, at last, the lowest level. Let's go.」

With that deceleration, the party went down the stairs to the lowest level.

「This is the lowest level.」

Ara, who was in the vanguard, muttered involuntarily when she saw the lowest level.

Spread before Ara's eyes were glowing walls, wide passages and a stone floor, not much different from the levels before. However, atmosphere was definitely different. The walls had detailed carvings, and stone ornaments could be seen hanging from the ceiling. The floor was made of stone, but it was a glossy material, like marble.

「What to say, I feel that all these materials are a step up from the dungeon so far.」

Kuust nodded at Vel's words.

「As for the particular material spread on the floor, it's not something that even nobles can obtain much of.」

「Is it so luxurious because the Altar of Inheritance is here, or are the lowest levels of other dungeons different as well.....」

As everyone looked at the surroundings admiringly, Elena clapped her hands to draw their attention.

「It's certainly different from what we have seen so far, but it doesn't matter now. In the end our goal is the Altar of Inheritance.So, which way do we go.」

Elena looked around and said that while somewhat troubled.

The stairs went down from the sixth level. At the bottom of the stairs, on the seventh level, the lowest level, the passages suddenly extended to the front, back, left and right.

「Perhaps, one of these leads to our target, the Altar of Inheritance. Another should be the boss room which leads to the dungeon nucleus. I don't know about the remaining two.」

「Guru~」

I agree with Rei's words, Set seemed to say as he gave a cry.

While looking on, Elena unconsciously nodded with a smile.

「It's probably as Rei said. The information gathered beforehand has confirmed those two.The question is, where is the Altar of Inheritance.....」

「Well, maybe we should rely on Rei's intuition as usual?」

「.....Hmph.」

Kuust gave a snort at Vel's disagreeable words, however he didn't have any better ideas that he could suggest.

「That's right. Rei's intuition has taken care of us many times to get this far. We will rely on it to the end.」

「Ah, I don't mind. However, even if you call it intuition, in the end I'm making a blind guess. I don't think it's that reliable.」

「Even if you can't find it using your intuition, it's my responsibility to make the decision. Rei, there's no reason for you to be blamed.」

Saying that to everyone.....or rather, to Rei as she glanced at Kuust, who was looking at Rei hatefully, Rei had to chose. He looked to the front, rear, left and right passages and chose one.....

「Left, I think.」

「Alright. Let's go to the left passage. The formation remains the same. Vel, I'll leave the traps to you.」

「No problem.」

Vel nodded in his usual light tone and went to the left passage.

They advanced down the passage for about 10 minutes. Without meeting any enemies or traps, they arrived in front of a room with a door.

A sculpture of a lion was engraved on the door. It seemed to be similar to some sort of magic item. If you were mentally weak, you would have a sense of oppression just by looking at the door.

「A door which is a magic item.....I, it's the first time I've seen one.」

「The door to Margrave Rowlocks office was also quite good, but after seeing

this.....」

However, it was as expected of the General Princess and her Knight escort under her control. Set was an A rank monster and Rei was an adventurer outside the norm. It seemed that it only gave them a deep impression.

「Well, the question is what's inside.Vel.」

「Roger that.」

He checked for any traps and judged there were none after a few seconds. He opened the door slowly and looked inside.....closing the door the next moment before coming back to Elena with cold sweat on his face. TLN: Nope, nope, nope.

「It's no use, no use. Inside is a Silver Lion, a S rank monster that even I know. It's not an opponent we can deal with.」

「A Silver Lion!?!」

Kuust cried out without thinking when he heard Vel's words. Even Rei's face was stunned with astonishment.

Silver Lion. As Vel said, it was a S rank monster, and there were extremely few sightings. As for their scarcity, it was because most of them had been killed. It was said that its silver fur, from which its name originates, could nullify most magic attacks and that bladed weapons had little effect as well. Because it was necessary to use blunt impact to its body directly to hurt it rather than cutting it, it was said that if you encountered one without any weapons like hammers or axes, you should bet on the possibility of escaping and run away at full speed. In addition, it also had a roar known as Lion's Roar. Since it created a shock wave, your eardrums would rupture if you heard it. It was a troublesome skill that deprived your sense of balance. If anything, rather than an ordinary monster, it was something that could be called a legendary existence.

TLN: So it's kinda like the Nemean Lion, except it's silver

「So, did it notice you?」

As expected, Elena asked with a serious expression. Vel nodded while wiping the large amount of sweat dripping down his forehead.

「Ah. I think it only recognises people who step into the room as enemies.」

「.....By the way, was the Altar of Inheritance inside?」

「There was nothing like it I could see. However, there was a huge gem like thing at the back.....probably, I think it's the dungeon nucleus.」

「I see. That explains why this dungeon hasn't been captured yet. The boss monster is a S ranked Silver Lion.」

「Silver Lion.....that, isn't that a monster which appears a lot in fairy tales?」

Vel nodded at Ara's question and Kuust answered with a wry smile.

「Yes, that Silver Lion.It's fortunate that it's not staying at the Altar of Inheritance. Elena-sama, what do we do?」

「We go back of course. Our goal is not to capture the dungeon, so we don't have to fight against the monster that is the Silver Lion.」

Everyone nodded at those words and quickly and noiselessly moved away from the door and back to the stairs.

「Rei's intuition is sharp. Or should I say, too sharp. Choosing the path to the dungeon boss room only has a 1/4 chance.But, I would like you to guess the location to the Altar of Inheritance if possible.」

「No, even if you say that. I guess it can't be helped since I chose it by intuition.」

「.....Stop it, Vel and Rei. As I said earlier, it was me who told Rei to chose. I also bet on ambiguous things like intuition. That's why I am responsible.」

「Such a thing, Elena-sama. It's not Elena-sama's fault. It's just that fool, Vel's, complaints.」

Upset by Elena's words, Ara said that in a panic while glaring at Vel.

「Hey, Vel. Are you complaining about Elena-sama?」

「Ah.....no, that, it's my bad. But since I saw a Silver Lion, a S rank monster, can't you consider my feelings for a bit?」

「Ara, Vel. You can both stop. You shouldn't show Elena-sama something so unseemly.」

Kuust arbitrated between them somehow and they started to discuss the next passage to take.

「Since the left was the boss room, I think the right passage on the opposite side is the correct one.」

「I understand what Ara wants to say but I would recommend the passage at the

front.」

「.....Elena-sama, we won't come to a decision like this. I think we should have you decide here.」

「In that case, let's try the right.」

Glancing towards Rei for a moment, she decided as she saw him stroke Set's back.

Even if Elena said right, it wouldn't necessarily be correct. However, she judged that Ara's words had some credibility.

However, she made up her mind after seeing the figure of Rei stroking Set.

She felt some sort of sense of security when she saw Rei. Elena, who had lived to battle, still didn't know what it was.

「Alright, well then, let's go. Next is the right passage, as I said before. Since the boss monster protecting the dungeon nucleus was a Silver Lion, I predict that the other monsters in this level are also powerful monsters. Don't get distracted.」

Nodding at Elena's words, they went down the right passage in single file. And as before, after walking for about 10 minutes, a door came into sight again.

「.....Now then. How about this time. Vel, please.」

「I hope it isn't a monster at the level of a Silver Lion.」

Though with a light tone, Vel still inspected the door for traps with a serious expression. After confirming that there were no traps like with the boss room, he gently opened the door. And.....

「Alright, it's the correct place! We've arrived at the Altar of Succession! There are no monsters inside.」

After confirming the inside of the room through the barely opened door, he shouted as he swung the door open.

「We're finally here.」

Elena looked past the door with a soft expression of relief compared to her usual sharp eyes.

What was there was a room that could only be described as a beautiful

ceremonial hall. Inside were three magic formations in the shape of a triangle comprised of innumerable green crystals brimming with magic power embedded into the room. Inside that magic formation, there was another one in the center of the triangle, drawing a complex design. And at the center of that magic formation was something like an altar.

「This is.....the Altar of Inheritance.」

It was a majestic room that you wouldn't think would exist in a dungeon. Rei muttered involuntarily while thinking those thoughts.

「Yes, here is the Altar of Inheritance. The place we've been aiming for, and in a sense, the place where I will be reborn.」

「.....What?」

Hearing her murmuring about reincarnation, Rei looked at her beautiful face without thinking.

Wondering what Rei was thinking with that look, Elena spoke up with a wry smile.

「I don't know what you're worried about, I didn't think Rei would be worried when I said that I would be reborn.That's right, we arrived here at the Altar of Inheritance with Rei's cooperation. It would be good to explain what rituals are done here.」

「Elena-sama!? Duke Kerebel told you to keep the matter a secret to reduce leaks as much as possible.....」

Though fascinated by the Altar of Inheritance like the others, Kuust, who had still been listening to their conversation interjected unexpectedly.

However, Elena shook her head with a wry smile.

「If any ritual is done here, Rei should be able to understand what the Inheritance Ceremony is anyway. So if we tell him now, it won't be that much of a difference.」

「.....I understand, if Elena-sama says so.....」

Convincing the reluctant Kuust, Elena continued talking after seeing Vel take out a water bottle from his waist pouch to pass to Kuust after tapping his shoulder.

「The ceremony performed at the Altar of Inheritance. For convenience, it's called the Inheritance Ceremony. To be brief, it is a ceremony to extract the magic power from a monster's magic stone and take it as your own.」

Chapter 99

After finally arriving at the lowest level of the dungeon, Rei and the others had reached their destination, the Altar of Inheritance. Because of that, Elena explained the ceremony that would be performed at the Altar of Inheritance. The information that it would allow a person to absorb a magic stone's power was unexpected for Rei.

「.....You will absorb the power of magic stones?」

Hearing those words, Rei quickly withdrew information from Zepairu's knowledge. At the very least, he had not heard of such a ceremony. But.....

(It's not in Zepairu's knowledge, it seems. Then it should be ceremony devised in the thousands of years after Zepairu disappeared. It seems similar in result to the Magic Beast Art in terms of absorbing the power of a magic stone.)

「Umu~. Monster's have overwhelmingly stronger physical abilities, magic power and special abilities compared to us humans. Attempts to absorb the power of magic stones, which could be called the core of the monster, into humans have been made before. However, in our kingdom, the success rate is still extremely low as the technique to do so is under research. About 90% of people who have tried were unable to endure the rejection reaction of the large amount magic power and died. Even in the rare case that it was successful, their body would change into a figure influenced by the monster.」

「What!?!」

At the information explained by Elena, Rei was at a loss for words. But he immediately gathered himself and grasped Elena's delicate looking shoulders.

「Did you come here to perform such a dangerous ceremony!?!」

At that frantic action, Elena gave a smile that was between a smile and a wry smile.

「Don't worry. What I just explained was there case where only mages and researchers were conducting the ceremony. As I said earlier, this technology is still undeveloped in our kingdom. It hasn't reached the level that it could be

performed easily on people. Only one place has reached that level.」

「.....That is?」

「The Altar of Inheritance. There are some occasions where such a place, named by mages and researchers, will appear rarely in a dungeon.like here. The ceremony done at the Altar of Inheritance is a different existence compared with what the researchers do. No, to be exact, it should be said that researchers analysed the ceremony of the Altar of Inheritance and were unable to replicate it perfectly.」

Elena glanced at the Altar at the center of the magic formation for an instant.

「As I said, the Inheritance Ceremony carried out using this Altar can be considered a completely different thing from the ceremonies performed by the mages and researchers. For example, you could consider the difference to be like the difference between a pebble and a meteorite hitting the road, a spark and hellfire, a water drop and the ocean or a breeze and a tornado.」

「.....Instead of example, please tell me the specifics. What exactly will happen when you perform the ceremony at this Altar of Succession.」

「Well, there will be no change in appearance due to the the influence of the magic stone. According to one theory, the change in appearance is due to the procedure used when the subject absorbs the power of the magic stone. If you perform it on the original, the Altar of Inheritance, such things can't happen. In addition, it allows the subject to absorb the pure magic power of the magic stone.Well, to put it briefly, would it be easier to understand if I said that people who perform this ceremony at the Altar of Inheritance will become an existence one step higher than humans?」

Elena explained while watching Kuust and Vel, who were investigating the ceremonial altar to prepare the ceremony.

「If it's such a great ceremony, why hasn't it spread around?」

「Although it is spreading, it's still limited to kingdoms who have actually completed the technique. Unfortunately, in the Mireana Kingdom, it is still under study. The mortality rate is too high and the best we can do is experiment on death row criminals. In addition, they are promised a pardon and will be permitted to enter into the army if they survive. However, the story is different with the Altar of Inheritance. Once the ceremony is completed, the

altar will collapse, so only one person can undergo the Inheritance Ceremony. As far as has been confirmed so far, its success rate is 100%.」

「Even so, why do you, the representative of the Nobles Faction, have to do it? No, if you were just a representative that would be fine. But you are the successor of Duke Kerebel, a central figure in the Nobles Faction.」

「.....It's because of that.」

「What?」

「Although it is a large group of nobles, a lot of them have only joined to learn about the inner circumstances. If something happens, there's a high possibility that they will go over to the Royalist Faction, there are also other with connections to other countries.Fortunately, I should say that the number of traitors are few. Still, there is the possibility of betrayal, we cannot recklessly give an individual such vast power from the Inheritance Ceremony. That is why, I, who could be called the representative of the Nobles Faction, challenged this dungeon with so few people.」

「Still, did Duke Kerebel himself realise that this would make his daughter an existence beyond a human?」

「That is so. I will not dispute that. I don't know what he thought, but at the very least, I challenged the dungeon knowing all this. As as I said earlier, if this ceremony succeeds, I will become an existence biologically above humans. I am the representative of the Nobles Faction. When considering the advantages and disadvantages obtained by doing this, it is impossible for my father to hesitate.....if he had hesitated, I would have despised him for it.」

As Elena said that, a strong will could be felt from her eyes. However, her eyes suddenly softened and smile appeared on her face.

Rei's face reddened unconsciously and he turned his eyes to the side, incidentally seeing Vel hand over a water bottle to Kuust.

「You can relax, there have been several people who have conducted the Inheritance Ceremony so far.However, the magic stones that they inherited were only from B rank monster.」

「.....What magic stone are you going to absorb?」

「Do you want to know?This is it.」

With the soft smile that she had before changed into a mischievous smile as

she took out a single magic stone from her waist pouch.

It was a golden magic stone, about the size of a person's face. Even just looking from the side, you could feel a powerful magic power from it.

It should be noted that Elena's waist pouch had its capacity increased with spatial magic. However, its capacity wasn't infinite like the Misty Ring, about the size of a small room, 2 Tatami in Rei's measurements. Even so, it was a very expensive magic item that was difficult for ordinary nobles to obtain.

TLN: 2 Tatami is about 3.3 m²

「This is.....a golden magic stone? It's huge.」

「It's an heirloom passed down our house, the magic stone of an Ancient Dragon.」

「What!?!」

Rei unexpectedly cried out at the words Ancient Dragon. In any case, most intelligent dragons were S rank monster, but only an intelligent dragon that had lived for a thousand years was called an Ancient Dragon. Their rank was about the same or even greater than Grimm, the Lich Lord that Rei become acquainted with on the fifth floor.

「It was a magic stone taken from an Ancient Dragon that a Duke Kerebel from dozens of generations ago had led a team of knights to subdue. It became an heirloom passed down as a family treasure of our house. I will inherit the power of this magic stone from an Ancient Dragon with this Inheritance Ceremony.」

「.....Is it really okay?」

「Fu~. Rei is quite the worrying person. Didn't I say that there had been no failures so far with the ceremony used at the Altar of Inheritance?」

「But weren't those from B rank monsters?」

「.....Certainly there might be some danger. However, it is best to do this sooner. A war with the Bestir Empire will occur in the near future and an overwhelming power is needed. In addition, as you know, I am the representative of the Nobles Faction. If a situation occurs that I lose to an enemy.....you probably understand what would happen?」

The military renown of the General Princess was heralded in neighbouring countries. Right now, Elena was probably the most famous person in the Nobles

Faction.....or rather in the entire Mireana Kingdom. If she was defeated in the battlefield by an enemy, it was easy for Rei to guess that the Mireana Kingdom's morale would drop to irrecoverable levels.

「And above all.....as I said earlier, we only have a simplified Inheritance Ceremony. The Bestir Empire has the technology. However, they haven't been able to make it easy enough to perform the ceremony on a large scale.....still, they seem to have enough people to use them as soldiers. Originally, the Mireana Kingdom's national power was weaker than the Bestir Empire's. If we are defeated in military power as well, we will lose for sure. According to the information my father obtained about the approaching war, the next group of people to complete the Inheritance Ceremony will be participating in the war. Our magic technology is inferior to theirs, it is difficult to increase our numbers using a simplified Inheritance Ceremony. Our only hope in competing is if a high quality warrior or a knight can successfully absorb the magic power from the magic stone of the Ancient Dragon using the Altar of Inheritance.....in other words, me.」

Looking into her eyes, Rei tried to speak out, but stopped.

He instinctively understood that Elena's determination wouldn't waver no matter what he said.

「Elena-sama, it's about time for the ceremony.」

Hearing Kuust call out, Elena nodded. Holding the magic stone of the Ancient Dragon in her hand, she gently placed it on the altar at the center of the magic formation.

「Rei and Set. I basically won't be able to move during the ceremony. Because of that, if any trouble occurs and monsters stray here, I'll leave them to you. The other three, Ara, Vel and Kuust won't be able to move either in order to perform the Inheritance Ceremony.」

「I understand. If a monster comes, no matter what may come, I will protect you by all means. You can start the ceremony with peace of mind.」

「Gurururu~」

Rei nodded and Set gave a cry to show his determination.

「.....Sorry. I leave our lives in your hands.」

Elena said that and stood in at the center of the magic formation surrounding the altar. Watching her, Ara, Vel and Kuust nodded at each other as they sat down at each of the three magic formations that were located around the magic formation the altar was at.

「Rei, I'm sorry but could you step away from the magic formations so that the ceremony doesn't fail by accident. Although I think I've mentioned it, there is only one opportunity. Whether the ceremony fails or succeeds, the Altar of Inheritance will still crumble away without a doubt.」

「I understand. I will watch out for monsters near the entrance.」

「Gururu~」

Rei nodded at Vel's words and went with Set to the entrance of the room.

While grasping the Death Scythe, he leaned against the door to the room as he watched the outside. The ceremony seemed to have begun as an intense light was emitted from behind him.

(The ceremony has started it seems. As I told them earlier, I should do what I can to stop monster from entering this room.)

The moment Rei thought that, Rei felt an intense pressure in addition to the light coming from behind him. Interested, he turned around to take a look. The three magic formations around the altar were emitting a green light. Magic power was transferred to the magic formation at the center, where Elena was standing with her eyes closed. As the magical light grew brighter every few seconds, the magic stone of the Ancient Dragon, which had been placed on the altar started emitting a golden light that did not lose out in brightness.....and the next moment, the green light was absorbed by the magic stone.

It was no exaggeration to say that the ceremony taking place before Rei's eyes was a fantastical sight. Originally, Rei should have been wary of monsters, but now his gaze was pinned towards the Altar of Inheritance.

「Gururu~」

Set was also attracted to the ceremony and watched as the golden magic stone absorbed the green light.

The absorption was completed several minutes after the golden magic stone

had started to absorb the green light from the magic formations. The only light that was now being emitted was from the magic stone of the Ancient Dragon, which released an overwhelming presence into its surroundings.

And Elena, who had her eyes closed as she was bathed in the light, seemed to lose consciousness.

Soon, the light being emitted from the Ancient Dragon's magic stone grew even stronger.....the magic stone started to break apart as it emitted the light.

And.....

「.....What?」

It was probably because Rei was fascinated by the ceremony that he noticed the movement. Yes, three magic formations surrounded the Altar of Inheritance. Originally, none of them should have moved from their magic formation until the ceremony was finished, but for some reason, one of them had casually stepped out. After that, they turned towards Elena and took out a dagger from their chest pocket and held it in their hand.....

「What are you doing Vel!?」

At first Rei had thought that it was part of the ceremony. However, when he saw Ara standing on the magic formation with a startled expression, he noticed that it was abnormal and shouted out loudly.

Even though Ara noticed Vel's movements, if Ara moved from her magic formation as well, the Inheritance Ceremony would no longer be able to be maintained. What would happen to Elena's body, she did not know. Because of that, she swung the only weapon she had and threw the Power Axe towards Vel. But.....

「Such an attack, did you think I wouldn't be able to avoid it?」

Vel shifted a little to avoid the axe that flew at him and approached the Altar of Inheritance.

「Originally, I wanted to kill Elena first, but it would probably be best to destroy this since she has already inherited the power of the magic stone to some extent.」

Muttering, he swung his dagger down at the magic stone.....

「Do you think you can do that!」

At that moment, Rei used his physical strength to close the gap to Vel.....

「Do it.」

Vel's short command sounded and a magic spear struck Rei from the side as he was swinging down the Death Scythe.

Chapter 100

During the Inheritance Ceremony, Vel suddenly took out a dagger and tried to destroy the magic stone of the Ancient Dragon.

Although Rei rushed towards him as soon as he saw that, a magic spear was stabbed at him just one step before Vel entered the Death Scythe's range.

He instinctively sensed danger at Vel's words and forcibly shifted his body. Still, the magic spear that stabbed out from behind him still gave a strong impact to his side.

Fortunately for him, Rei was wearing a magic item, the Dragon Robe. At first glance it looked like an ordinary robe, but its true identity was of a highest quality item made by sewing two layers of dragon skin over dragon scales, it boasted one of the highest magical and physical defenses. Its defensive power was much greater than that of plate mail. Thanks to that, it didn't become a situation where the magic spear penetrated into his flank.

「Damn, w-what!?!」

However, even if it didn't stab into him, the impact couldn't be ignored. And for Rei, who was still trying to swing the Death Scythe, the blow broke his balance.

Nevertheless, he still didn't fall to the ground, it was probably due to Rei's extremely high physical abilities that he managed to keep himself up with his hands. When Rei reflexively looked back, the sight of Kuust thrusting his magic spear towards him filled his vision.

「Set!」

「Gururururu~!」

Set answered Rei's shout and tried to slash his claws in from the side.....

「No, Rei-dono! If Kuust is taken out of the magic formation now, there will be a bad effect on Elena's ceremony!」

「Tch, Set!」

「Gururu~!」

Probably understanding what Rei wanted, Set stopped his attack from the side and slammed Kuust down into the magic formation instead, holding him down to stop him from moving.

Confirming that, he dashed forward again towards Vel.....

「You're a bit too late.」

With a ridiculing smile on his face, he swung his dagger down at the magic stone, which had already shrunk by 70%, without any hesitation.

「Stop itttttttttt!」

Shouting out, Rei swung the Death Scythe even though he knew he wouldn't make it in time.....

「Oops. That's dangerous, very dangerous.」

Vel stabbed his dagger into the magic stone, destroying it before jumping backwards and taking some distance from Rei.

「Vel!」

「Don't get so angry. Even I didn't like what I had to do.However, it's a pity. It was the only hope to save the Mireana Kingdom. Now it will be impossible to compete against the Bestir Empire.」

Rei ground his teeth as Vel told him with a big smile.

「More than that, don't you have to look behind you?」

Rei turned to look back for a moment. Maybe due to the fact that the ceremony was forcibly interrupted half way, he saw that Ara, Kuust.....even Elena had lost consciousness and had collapsed on the magic formation.

Seeing that situation, he grasped the handle of the Death Scythe tightly in his hands.

(Calm down. Right now, it's better to collect information than to kill him.)

Muttering in his mind, he calmed his raging heart.

「.....Why?」

「Now then, what is all this for you ask?」

Rei and Vel. Vel was superior in ability as a thief, but if you considered pure

fighting strength, Vel couldn't even reach Rei's feet. Even so, Vel had a smile on his face, he was smiling as if watching a fun performance.

While having doubts, he kept talking to try to gather more information.

「You were a member of Elena's Knight escort? And yet, why would you come here and betray her?」

「What do you think?」

「I don't want questions in reply to questions.」

Bang~, Rei wielded the Death Scythe threateningly.

「Whoops, I don't stand a chance if we have to fight. I see, I'll answer then. Well then, why do you think I betrayed Elena here?」

「If you think about the probable assumptions, you've turned to the Bestir Empire's side.」

「Well, that's only half of it. The correct answer is that not just me, but my whole house has turned to the Bestir Empire's side.」

「.....Your house, is it? According to the story I've heard, your house should have been nobles as well? I've heard that you also have a close relationship to Duke Kerebel, a central figure in the Nobles Faction, the second largest faction next to the Royalists.」

「That is the case. But my thoughts aside, my father does not believe that the Mireana Kingdom can compete with the Bestir Empire. There are several reasons for this, but the biggest reason is technology. Though I think you heard it from Elena after reaching the Altar of Succession, though it's simplified, the Bestir Empire has established an Inheritance Ceremony and has already had a number of people undergo it. Ah, by the way, I can tell you that soldiers who endured the Inheritance Ceremony are called 『Demon Soldiers』.I think it's simple.」

「Demon Soldiers. So you decided that there was no chance of winning and defected.」

「Yes. Well, that is my father's opinion, I'm different.」

Vel kept explaining with a smile on his face.

「In that case, why did you turn traitor? Haven't you also been acquainted with Elena for a long time?」

「That's right. It's been roughly five years since I joined Duke Kerebel's Knights.」
「If you've lived with each other for such a long time, then naturally there should be feelings. Besides, aren't you Knights that also serve as Elena's escorts?」

「Ahh, that's no mistake. But.....」

As he said that, Vel's smile suddenly changed.

If it was said that his smile up until now had been an amused smile, now it was like the smile of a madman.

「I just thought about it. It's nice to kill people from the Bestir Empire by being part of the Mireana Kingdom as it is. But a person on the Bestir Empires side seems to have more possibilities to kill people.」

「A sadistic murderer.」

「Oh? That title is good. Yep, in the future I'll use that. Vel Sails, the sadistic murderer.」

「.....It's not something I can say but, what is the fun in killing people?」

Rei himself had killed all the members of Dark Night's Star during the attack on the Orc village. Even in the rank up test, he had killed bandits. However, he only killed them because it was necessary. He had never felt pleasure in the act of killing people. Because of that, he couldn't understand the man before him.

「Eh? It's fun. Ending a person's life with your own hands, touching their skin and cutting it and their flesh. The scream that comes out when you stab your knife into a living person and break their bones! And the face of their despair when you cut out their organs and show them their lungs!Ahh, I can't bear it any longer.」

「.....I was an idiot to talk with a madman.」

「Madman, I don't need you to compliment me so much. Of course, you're wondering why I would side with the Bestir Empire. As I said earlier, there is a technique to make Demon Soldiers over there. Also, it isn't a low level technology with a high failure rate like here in the Mireana Kingdom, but a technology with a high success rate. If I became a Demon Soldier over there, what kind of abilities would I gain? Could I dissolve a person with strong acid? Mentioning that, there's also the tentacles like the Emerald Wolves. It

isn't too fascinating though to be able to change my body size like a Spriggan..... no, it might not be so bad to enjoy the looks of despair if you pretend to be a small child to approach them and then transform into a giant in front of them.」
「He's definitely a madman.」

While muttering, he turned to look at the unconscious Kuust, whom Set was still holding down just in case.

「So, what did you do to Kuust?」
「What? Originally, Kuust hated you, isn't that right?」
「.....It's different. Certainly he disliked or hated me. However, his love and respect of Elena was still greater than his dislike or hatred of me. Do you think he would obstruct someone who was attacking someone else who was likely to cause harm to Elena, who was his superior?」

Though Kuust thoroughly despised and spurned Rei, the respect that he gave to his superior, Elena, was genuine. Maybe it was feelings of love, or that he was attracted to her fame as the General Princess, or maybe because she was someone as the center of the Nobles Faction, Rei didn't know. However, he had no doubt his respect was real. If that wasn't the case, perhaps Kuust would already have been slashed by the Death Scythe by now.

「I see, I see. It's unexpected that though you disliked each other, you still believe in him. Let me give you a hint. What's this?」

Saying that, he removed a bottle of water from his waist pouch.

However, when he saw that bottle, Rei recalled some things.

Hadn't he seen Vel hand over a water bottle to Kuust, then drank from it, several times after entering the dungeon?

「Did you use some sort of magical potion?」

Rei muttered, but was puzzled in his mind.

(I recall Vel handing that bottle of water over to Kuust. However, at that time, Vel had drank from it himself as well.)

「Congratulations, correct answer! As you said, Kuust's actions became strange after drinking this magic potion.」

「But, you ought to have drank from that bottle as well?」

「Ahh, you were paying attention. But, do you not know that there are antidotes for magic potions?」

「So you manipulated Kuust without the effects of the magic potion affecting yourself.」

「Yes. But I only made Kuust drink the magic potion, I can't do anything if the person rejects it in his mind. There must be a desire to do something in his subconscious, like the first time I ordered him. Well, I didn't think that Kuust's unconscious hatred against you was that great.」

Roar-!

Rei swung the Death Scythe in his hands. A roar echoed around as its speed split the air.

「That's good enough, shut up. I only know one thing after I listening to your story.」

「What? You should kill me before I escape to the Bestir Empire because I'm dangerous?」

Isn't that natural? Vel seemed to say as he questioned Rei, but Rei shook his head.

「No. I don't mind that. Just watching you makes me feel uncomfortable. That's why I'll kill you here! Flying Slash!」

It was the easiest skill to use from the Death Scythe, in addition, the power of the skill was relatively high.

The Death Scythe was swung down, slashing through the air towards Vel.

While watching death approaching in the form of that slash, Vel still smiled crazily.....

「What!?!」

It was not Vel who said that.....but Rei.

Rei unconsciously gave a cry as he looked towards Vel. Some sort of vividly purple tentacles which had appeared to block the slash from Rei were torn apart.

The tips of the tentacle that tried to block the Flying Slash were cut and soon fell to the ground. However, another one immediately took its place and stretched out to defend Vel. The source of the tentacles was the inner pocket of Vel's leather armour.

「Ahahahaha. That's too bad. This is a magical creature made by the alchemists of the Bestir Empire to serve as escorts. It will be hard to deal with this fellow if you have too little strength.」

With a look of ridicule, Vel turned to look at Rei.

In his eyes, he had a look of distorted pleasure as the powerful person in front of him would soon become prey to kill.

But.....

「What about it?」

He was not confused or panicking. At Rei's extremely calm reply, Vel frowned his eyebrows unpleasantly.

「What are you talking about. Your attacks can't reach me, why are you so calm?」

「Well then, I wonder. Certainly my attack had no effect on you. However, you seem to have forgotten that the skill you blocked isn't the only one I have. In addition.....even if my attack was ineffective, your attacks would be the same. Even though Kuust ambushed me, I didn't take any damage. Your attacks are overwhelming inferior to Kuust's, what are you going to do?」

「Certainly, but that might not be so. However, you only blocked Kuust's attack because of your robe right? If that's so, I can just aim for the face, and limbs that the robe doesn't cover.」

He took a dagger out from his chest. It was obvious from the purple blade that it wasn't an ordinary dagger.

「Poison Knife. It's a high level magic item. It has the wonderful effect that if you are even scratched, your body will be paralyzed for about ten minutes..... can you counter that Rei?」

「Well, even if you say that it's a powerful magic item, there will still only be an effect if you scratch my face, hands or feet. In the first place, do you even think

you can fight me in melee combat? With your bow and knife, you could only attack from the rear, but now there's no one to act as a shield for you. Are you going to leave that to your tentacles?」

Rei provoked Vel by clearly pointing out his weakness.

However, Vel still kept his smile as he heard Rei's words.

「Yes, you're right, that is true. In that case, I just have to make a vanguard.」

Pachi~, Vel snapped his fingers. And the next moment.

「Gururu~!」

Set's somewhat confused cry could be heard and Rei immediately jumped to the side.

The next moment, something went through the place Rei was at just a moment before. And as Rei avoided it, that something passed him by and stood between Rei and Vel.

「.....Kuust.」

Chapter 101

A man stood between Rei and Vel. It was Kuust, who had also intercepted Rei earlier when he had been about to attack Vel.

However, there was no light of consciousness in his eyes. The way Kuust stood before him, Rei felt that Kuust had no control over himself.

「Here, this solves the problem of the wall.」

Standing behind Kuust, Vel turned to look towards Rei with the same crazy smile as before. But.....

「He certainly can be used as a wall for you. However, in the end, it's Kuust. As you already know, in terms of pure ability, there's an overwhelming difference between me and Kuust. But you're still going to leave the role of the wall to just Kuust?」

While saying that to provoke him on purpose, Rei focused his mind on the two other people who had fainted.

(If Elena and Ara are also being manipulated somehow, judging from Vel's character, he would show his cards here to brag.....)

Rei tried to watch the area all around himself so that he wouldn't miss anything but Vel's reply was unexpected.

「Certainly, in an ordinary situation, Kuust can't beat you.But, what if he wasn't in his normal state?」

「.....What?」

「In the first place, if a magic potion is used to control a person's consciousness, can you predict the person's abilities? For example, ignoring the movement of the body during fighting, a person's thoughts during battle are not as obvious if they are being manipulated.Well, there are more sophisticated magic potions in this world than the one I used, there's also one that allows a person to be manipulated without directly controlling them. Unfortunately, the magic potion I used isn't as great as that.Really, I think such things should be spread out, the Bestir Empire is too careful with minor things like this. The

Mantis was also great.」

「.....The Mantis, was it?」

Mantis. The first thing that came into his mind at those words was the huge monster that they had encountered on the way to the dungeon from Gimuru. Using something like optical camouflage, it had blended into the surroundings to wait for them. The monster had then melted away and disappeared as soon as they had defeated it, destroying the evidence.

「I see, that was informative. You were surprised then as well though.」

「Hm? Ahh, that's different. It's true that the monster is the work of an alchemist from the Bestir Empire, but I had nothing to do with it. Or should I say, Even if you say that I have betrayed the Mireana Kingdom, given a chance to kill Elena, the General Princess, I don't think you need to considered which has a higher priority.」

「In other words, you were as good as a sacrifice.」

Though Rei said that to provoke him even more, Vel took it in stride and paid no attention to it.

「Well, something like that. That's fine with me. If I am treated like a sacrifice and I die, then it's because I was only an existence at that level. Of course, I have no intention to lose quietly.It seems that you've been stalling for time for a while, whether it's Elena, Ara or Kuust, I don't think they will wake up so easily? Besides, you weren't the only one stalling for time either.It's about time.」

While showing a smile, he took a whistle from his pocket.

The moment he saw that whistle, an unpleasant feeling went up Rei's spine.....

「Set!」

「Gurururururu~!」

Set released a Wind Arrow at the same time Rei shouted to him. Rei ran past Kuust as Kuust blocked the wind arrow with a water spell from his magic spear. As Vel brought the whistle to his mouth, Rei swung the Death Scythe at him. No, the moment he was about to swing it down, tentacles sprung out and completely covered Vel while several egg shaped things, a few centimeters

thick each, were shot towards Rei.

「Tch!」

Rei, almost on reflex, either avoided them or tore through them with the Death Scythe, but in that gap, Vel leapt back and took some distance from Rei. He then took a deep breath and blew heavily into the whistle in his hand.

Piiiiii~, as the high pitched sound echoed into the surroundings, Set, who had been releasing wind arrows constantly, leapt away from his current location. And the next moment.....

Roar-! Something about the same size as a human let out a roar as it landed where Set had been just before.

If Set has hesitated slightly on whether to shoot one more wind arrow before moving, it would have been Set's back that would have been crushed instead of the pavement.

「.....Is that also one of the fruits of alchemy?」

Rei retreated with Set and spoke as he looked at the thing which had appeared further away from Vel and Kuust.

「Yes, yes. This is something that was lent to me by the Bestir Empire for this mission. It's a so called Golem. Well, just by looking at it you can tell, but it's much faster than an ordinary Golem. Any how, let alone Rei, even Set didn't sense it following us.」

Golem. It was an artificial life form that could be made from various materials such as stone, dirt, wood or bones. Although it was an artificial life form, it basically had no emotion or will, it simply handled the orders given to it by its master. It gave Rei the impression of a robot.

And, the Golem before Rei was certainly quite different from what he knew of them from Zepairu's knowledge or the books that he had read in the library. First of all, its size was different. Although ordinary Golems were about 3m tall, This Golem was only as tall as Rei. That is, about 1.6m. Half the size of a normal Golem.

(Golem.....or rather, maybe it should be called an Automata. No, such a

concept doesn't exist in this world, so maybe it is a Golem.)

He thought of that in his mind as he held the Death Scythe against the Golem standing in front of him and Set.

(Esta Nord, the alchemist of Zepairu's organisation may have been able to make a Golem at this level.But according to Zepairu's knowledge, it seems that he was passionate about the development of magic items and not really interested in Golems.)

「Even if you include this Golem, I think it doesn't change the fact that I'm still at an advantage. Set can fight the Golem and I can deal with you and Kuust.」
「Hmm, well, it certainly is so if you consider it normally.If you consider it normally that is.」

While saying that, he took a gem shaped like a triangular pyramid, a few centimeters tall, from his pocket. Rei thought that it was a magic stone for a moment, but it was obvious that it wasn't a magic stone due to its shape.

「Are you worried about this? This thing, I can use it like this.....-!」

He swung his hand that held the triangular pyramid shaped gem down.....at Kuust's neck. And.....

「GAH-, GAAAAaaaaAAaaa—!!」

The moment the tip of the gem struck him, the gem entered Kuust's body from his neck, as if it were a living thing. At the same time, Kuust released a beast like scream.

「Hm? I wonder if the impact was stronger than I thought? Did he regain consciousness?」

Vel turned to look at Kuust with eyes as if he was looking at an interesting performance. The next moment, the colour of delight filled his eyes.

「Wh-.....what, I, what is going on? The pain in my body.....」

Yes, Kuust, who should have fainted, had woken up.

And, noticing Vel looking at him with interested eyes, remember the events before he had fainted at the same time.

「Vel, you-!What!?!」

Kuust reflexively tried to stab Vel with his magic spear and noticed the next moment that he couldn't move his body from the neck down.

「Vel, what have you done to me!」

Kuust glared and Vel strongly. If you could kill people with looks, perhaps Kuust's eyes, which were will with hatred, would have killed Vel by now.

「What, you don't remember anything? Here, didn't you drink water from my bottle several times? There was a magic potion in there. Ah, I will say this before you ask, but I'm fine as I've drank an antidote.」

「.....You, what did you do all this for.」

「No, that is already settled. In order to get preferential treatment over at the Bestir Empire, I need the head of the General Princess, who has been a thorn in their side.Well, I've had a hard time? First of all, Elena is usually sharp. You and Ara are the other Knights escorting her so I couldn't get any helpers.Then, the information on the Altar of Inheritance came in. Due to the special requirement of the ceremony, I had expected it to be just the three of us and one more person sent by Margrave Rowlocks due to the location of the dungeon. I was correct. However, my biggest miscalculation was suggesting to my father that we limit the extra person to a D rank adventurer. To think that a person like Rei, who was beyond my imagination, would be in D rank.」

The sound of teeth grinding together could be heard. The source of the sound was natural.

「You.....you have no pride as a noble!」

「Pride? To me, pride is worth less than dust. Thanks to that pride I couldn't kill anyone except in wars.」

「Damn!」

「Now then, that's enough explanation I guess? Well, shall we bring a close to this performance?」

Vel snapped his fingers. Kuust's body started to move without his permission and he turned to point the magic spear in his hand at Rei.

「What!?!」

「This is the effect of the magic potion that you drank. Furthermore.....」

Snapping his fingers again, the next moment, Kuust dashed towards Rei and thrust his magic spear at him.

「Ugh, avoid it!」

While being forced to move his body, Kuust shouted at Rei. As he couldn't receive the attack directly, Rei dodged it, passing him by so that he would strike Vel with the Death Scythe. That was his intention.....

『What!?!』

Rei and Kuust let out surprised voices at the same time.

For Rei, it was because the magic spear was thrust at him at a speed which was incomparable to previous thrusts he had seen in the dungeon so far. For Kuust, it was because his body was moving faster, more skillfully and stronger than before.

At the magic spear which thrust out sharply, Rei reflexively parried it with the Death Scythe.

「Ahahahahaha. Surprised? I was surprised! Currently, Kuust's physical abilities has been double compared to usual.....no, it is three times greater. Do you understand, that's why I'm still so calm.」

While listening to Vel shouting it out proudly, Rei avoided and blocked the continuous thrusts from Kuust's magic spear.

The battle between the Golem and Set had started a bit further away from there. Avoiding the attacks of the long sword that the Golem held, Set counter attacked by using his sharp claws to repeatedly strike the Golem's shield.

「Vel, you-! Freely controlling my body.....I absolutely cannot permit it!」

Kuust shouted as if he was overcome with rage, but Vel looked on at Kuust and Rei's fight interestingly as if the anger had nothing to do with him.

「Hey, hey, is it fine to look at me? Your body is still facing Rei without your control.」

「Damn!」

Kuust thrust out three times at Rei's belly, chest and throat. Rei parried them with the handle of the Death Scythe. His face no longer had the anxiety that he

had felt a few second ago. Even if Vel could boost Kuust's physical abilities and manipulate him freely, in the end, he was still doing it by force and manipulating him by force. It didn't mean that Vel had mastered the art of spear fighting that Kuust had learned.

(No, to be exact, he used the power of the gem to forcibly raise Kuust's physical abilities to make up for his lack of proficiency.)

While thinking that, he thrust the handle of the Death Scythe into the ground as a shield to block Kuust's incoming spear thrust aimed at his right foot.

「Gah~!」

Despite Kuust had his physical abilities boosted, the Death Scythe weighed over a 100kg and Rei had a physical strength above the norm. The attack had originally aimed to knock Rei off his feet but Kuust felt his strengthened hands go numb when he stuck the handle of the Death Scythe.

However, he didn't stop. Rotating on the spot, using the momentum from the parried attack, he tried to hit Rei's left side with the magic spear.

Rei promptly ducked down and moved back to avoid it. Making sure that the magic spear had passed in front of him, he dashed forward to get within a suitable attacking distance to Kuust.

「Don't die.」

While muttering that, he hammered the handle of the Death Scythe into Kuust's stomach.

The attack was meant to knock Kuust out.....

「G-Gah-!」

But Kuust kept his consciousness even after being struck in the stomach.

It was true that Kuust was equipped with a full set of plate armour, which had a high defensive power. However, that attack had even broken his armour before striking him in the stomach. Normally, he should have fainted right away after being struck by that, but Kuust kept his consciousness as his face distorted in agony.

「Ahahahahahahaha. It's impossible, impossible. The current Kuust can't

faint.....no, that's not possible. He's been strengthened. However, as compensation, his entire body should be feeling terrible pain. Hey, Kuust. How do you feel? You can't control your body and you can't lose consciousness. Isn't it a terrible humiliation for someone with a lot of pride like you?」

Finding it funny, Vel started to laugh.

「.....ill.」

「Eh? Did you say something? I don't want to hear any whining from someone who has been trying to kill me.」

「Kill me.....destroy him! Rei!」

Chapter 102

With his body manipulated by Vel, Kuust shouted at Rei. To kill him and defeat Vel.

Vel heard his should and burst into laughter unintentionally.

「Kukukuku~. Ahahahaha~! Kuust! Your pride as a noble is so great, Kuust! To ask Rei, who you hate so much, to kill you! Ahahahaha. Hehehehehe. No, it's useless. I'll die from laughing. Wow, my sides.....I-I see. Are you trying to kill me with laughter? If so, that will definitely work!」

Vel laughed loudly while holding his sides.

However, Kuust did not look at that as turned to Rei, who was dodging and blocking his continuous attacks.

「.....Please, kill me. Then slay him. If you were hired as Elena's escort, then do your duty!」

Rei checked his surroundings as he moved his head by a few cm, avoiding a stab at his face by a hair's breadth.

Further away, the fight between Set and the Golem was still going fiercely. It could be said that the battle was hanging on a fine balance. The shield of the Golem had already become tattered and some scars could be seen on the Golem itself. On the other hand, Set had been lightly injured by the Golem's sword when they had mutually struck each other. The injuries he had suffered were already healing due to the effect of the magic item he wore on his neck, Love of Shizukuishi. Because of that, it was clear at a glance who held the advantage. However, the Golem had no consciousness and continued to carry out its orders. There was no such thing as being frightened by its injuries, there was also no thoughts of retreat to adjust its own posture.

(Although Set will definitely win, it is still going to take some time.....it seems.)

Next, he turned his eyes to Elena and Ara, who had fainted near the Altar of Inheritance and had fallen onto the magic formations.

It seemed to be the side effect of the ceremony being forcibly interrupted halfway. Although the battle had been happening so close by, they showed no signs of waking up.

(It seems that hope was too faint. In that case.....)

He finally turned to Kuust as he leapt back. The next moment, a water spell that Kuust had released hit the place Rei had been a moment ago.

「.....Is that fine with you?」

It was difficult but not impossible to get to Vel by avoiding Kuust. However, considering the power of the automatic defense provided by the tentacles coming out of Vel's pocket, Kuust would be manipulated to support Vel before Rei could take him out. He was fighting against two people after all. In order to prevent that from happening, he had to stop Kuust's movements first. Because he was being manipulated, it wasn't possible to stop him in this condition with only light injuries. In other words, he either had to die or take an attack that would almost kill him.

「Of course.Finally, I would like to say that I dislike you. You can even say I hate you. You lack respect to nobles, your language is crude and you hardly know any manners. Now that I think about it, you also have a casual attitude towards Elena-sama.」

As Kuust spoke, he thrust his spear at Rei's face before moving his feet and swinging it at Rei's body on the return.

Rei avoided or blocked the attacks with the Death Scythe in the same way as before as he listened to Kuust's words.

Though it was true that he didn't like the spearman standing before him, when he considered the fact that these might be Kuust's last words, he felt that it was courteous to listen to them to the end. Rei kept listening as he avoided Kuust's attacks.

「You lack all those things, but I still have to recognise your abilities. I mean, even if I said that I wasn't using my spear, you still defeated me. In addition, even though Vel manipulated me like this, you can still avoid my attacks with my increased physical ability.」

「Ahh, are you still going to continue this dull story? If this takes too long, how am I supposed to help Elena or Ara?」

「-!?Therefore, I beg you! That guy, betraying Elena-sama's trust and shamelessly betraying the Mireana Kingdom, my home country.....」

「.....I understand. You can sleep for now.」

With those words, he struck the tip of the spear with the handle of the Death Scythe from below.

With Rei's inhuman strength and the Death Scythe that weighed over 100kg, even Kuust, who was one of the leading spearmen serving under Duke Kerebel, couldn't keep hold of the magic spear with his grip strength. The magic spear was knocked up and pierced into the ceiling. And from that posture, Rei made one turn and stabbed the handle of the Death Scythe into Kuust's belly, which was still covered by armour.....

Bang~! With a sound that humans shouldn't have been able to make, Kuust was blown away. The body of the full plate mail had completely shattered from the point blank impact of the handle of the Death Scythe. Fragments of the armour scattered all over the floor.

「Gah~!」

As expected, the attack was intense. Though he gave a groan, Kuust had lost consciousness as he was blown away. For a moment, Rei thought about whether he had actually fainted or not like the first time he attacked Vel. However, Kuust had given his life away for this, Rei couldn't miss the opportunity provided by someone who begged him even though Kuust hated him. He dashed towards Vel who was looking at him with his usual smile.

「Haah!」

He struck with a shout. It came down on Vel with a speed, sharpness and power as if would split space.....

「Bad luck!」

At Vel's mocking words, what Rei felt in his hands was not the feeling of cutting through flesh or crushing bones. It was as if he was crushing metal or stone.

「A Golem, what?」

Rei unconsciously muttered out what he thought it was as he cut it down. Yes, the thing that had caught the Death Scythe's attack on Vel was a Golem that had appeared from nowhere. No, it hadn't been from nowhere. The place the Golem had actually appeared from had been reflected in Rei's eyes clearly. It had appeared from a pouch at Vel's waist.

「Ah, were you surprised? Did it surprise you? You never thought that I had a spatial pouch did you? I see, well normally speaking, it's not something that you could buy with the assets of a viscount family.」

TLN: I was going to use bag of holding but decided against it, the spatial pouch works the same way though.

For a moment, Rei glanced at Elena, who had fainted in front of the Altar of Inheritance. On her waist, the spatial pouch that he had seen last night was still there.

「Hm? Oh, I'm sorry. This is my pouch, it's not like I took away Elena's」

「.....The Bestir Empire, is it.」

「Oh, so you understood.」

「Well, you betrayed the Mireana Kingdom, your home country and turned to the Bestir Empire. Considering past events, the Bestir Empire also has a high level of technology in alchemy. That giant mantis like chimera is a good example.」

「Great answer! The Bestir Empire is comparable to the Magic City Osus if you were to consider alchemy alone.Well, it still costs a lot of money to make a spatial pouch though. Even then, the storage capacity of my pouch is also quite small compared to Elena's.」

「It's looks to be so.」

Rei muttered as he looked at the Golem he had just cut through.

Before him was a small Golem, the size of a Goblin. The Golem had been split into right and left halves by the Death Scythe and had fallen on the spot.

(From what Elena told me, although it's a spatial pouch, the space inside can only be expanded by 1 to 2 tatami at most. In that case, a big Golem can't be placed inside. In fact, the one that blocked the Death Scythe was only the size of

a Goblin. That means he shouldn't have any more! Most of the tricks he's kept have surprised me. Because of that, I should keep the initiative in combat.)

As he thought, he reflexively swung the Death Scythe when he saw something move in his peripheral vision. He cut off a tentacle that stretched out from Vel's pocket.

「Don't think that such a level of attacks can hurt me!」

With a big swing of the Death Scythe, he tore apart several tentacles that were growing out.

Although they were made with alchemy, they couldn't do much to block the magic empowered Death Scythe. However.....

「Whoops, as expected of Rei. You're definitely A rank if you consider combat power alone.」

Despite the tentacles being cut away as soon as they grew out, Vel still smiled as usual. However, the next moment, his smile changed from an amused smile to a grin, like that of a child who had succeeded in a prank.

「However.....can you only pay attention to me?」

「-!?!」

Vel's gaze. Realising who Vel was looking at, Rei used the Death Scythe's handle to parry all the tentacles that were about to strike him as he leapt backwards. The tentacles grew again but Rei's physical abilities were greater and they grasped the air.

At the end of his look was the figure of Elena, who had fainted and collapsed on the ground.And a familiar Golem was heading towards her. It was the little Golem that had protected Vel from Rei's Death Scythe a little earlier. Though its head should have been destroyed by the Death Scythe, the Golem slowly but surely went closer to Elena.

The reason the Golem still staggered forward, in addition to its head being destroyed, may have been the huge sword in its hands.

No, it was just because the Golem was small that the sword looked big. Yes. It was an ordinary long sword that could kill people by stabbing or slashing them.

TLN: Yes, this Golem is the one that was cut in half. No, I don't know why it's in one piece and only its head was destroyed.

「When did that happen!」

Rei dashed forward. However, the Golem had already raised its long sword and was swinging it down at the neck of the fainted Elena.....

(Damn, I won't make it!?)

He took out a dagger from the Misty Ring and tried to throw it at the Golem, but its sword had already swung down.....

「Guh!」

A voice of agony rang out at the same time as the sound of the sword piercing into flesh. But the voice wasn't Elena's as Rei had expected it to be. It was a deeper voice. Consciously ignoring the pained voice, Rei threw the dagger, which flew forward through the air and pierced into the body of the Golem. At the same time, the Golem was smashed into the wall as it was pierced through by the dagger and fell onto the stone floor like a broken toy.

What Rei saw after destroying the Golem was the figure of Kuust, who had already been seriously injured by Rei's previous attack. The sword had gone through him, up to mid blade. However, thanks to Kuust's interception, the sword now stood in the stone floor and not in Elena.

「Kuust!」

Rei shouted out unintentionally.

Previously, his attack had blown Kuust away. Struck by the Death Scythe, an extremely powerful magic item, wielded with Rei's strength, it was an attack that even shattered plate mail. He shouldn't have been able to protect himself against it.

「Guh, w-what.....are you doing. Vel.....kill him!」

At those words, which Kuust spoke out as blood literally flowed out his mouth, Rei bit his lips before turning to Vel.

「Damn it, doing such a worthless thing like protecting your friends with your body.」

「Magic Shield!」

Rei used the Death Scythe's skill Magic Shield. The next moment, a shield of light formed and rose next to Rei.

「It seems you have no more tricks left!」

「That may be true, yes, yes, but it won't be so easy.」

Rei dashed forward and narrowed the distance as he poured magic power into the Death Scythe. Several daggers were thrown at Rei but he evaded most of them with minimal movements.

「Things like a tearjerker story are not so popular right now!」

As the distance shrank, tentacles stretched out towards Rei from Vel's pocket. If any of those sharp tips pierced into Rei, they would immediately grow out barbs. However.....

「A nuisance!」

Slash-!

With a shout, the Death Scythe tore through all the tentacles.

「Damn!」

Indeed, Vel judged that situation was dangerous. He threw some sort of glass bottle that he took out from his waist pouch as he jumped back. The bottle drew an arc as it flew towards Rei.....

「That's naive!」

Swapping the Death Scythe to his left hand, he caught the bottle with his right hand and quickly threw it back at Vel.

「Eh?」

Vel hadn't realised what had happened. Letting out a confused voice, he tried to avoid the bottle as soon as he realised that it had been thrown back.....

Gashan~!

A tentacle stretched out from Vel's pocket and intercepted the glass bottle.

Yes, the tentacles extending from Vel's pocket were made with alchemy and

had the property of automatically intercepting any attacks made against him. Even if the attack was from a sword, spear or a big scythe like the Death Scythe.Even if it was a glass bottle, what it would do wouldn't change. In other words, using its sharp edge, it shattered the glass bottle heading towards Vel.

If it had been an ordinary glass bottle, it might have just fallen to the floor without breaking. But the one Vel had thrown was deliberately made fragile. What Vel was most astonished about was the fact that Rei had caught the glass bottle without breaking it.

TLN: What kind of glass bottle wouldn't break after being hit by a razor tentacle and falling to a stone floor? I have no idea.

The glass bottle shattered, meaning that the liquid that was inside fell onto Vel.

「UWAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA-!」

Covered in the liquid that was inside the glass bottle, Vel screamed as he held his face. Rei swung the Death Scythe down at that moment, but when he saw Vel's horribly melted face, his shock made him shift the Death Scythe slightly..... and instead of slashing the body, Rei cut off Vel's left arm from the shoulder.

Chapter 103

「UWAAAAAAAAAAAAAA-!」

Vel's left arm had been cut off from the shoulder and kept spilling blood as he held his ugly melted face with his right hand.

Rei had been startled by his ugly face for a moment and had stopped for an instant as he was swinging down the Death Scythe to kill him.....

「GURU~!」

Hearing Set's urgent cry from behind him, Rei noticed something coming towards him and swiftly swung the Death Scythe.

「.....」

However, the enemy still kept closing in. That is, the Golem that had been fight Set didn't even try to avoid it. As it approached, it was torn in half by the magic empowered blade of the Death Scythe.

(Dangerous!?)

Rei leapt back almost on reflex. The next moment, the Golem that had been cut in two by the Death Scythe glowed brightly.....

Roar-!

With that, it exploded with a big bang.

Rei received that blast at close range, but after the flames from the explosion cleared away, it revealed him to be completely unscathed. Instead, the magic shield that had been floating around Rei disappeared like haze.

(No way, a suicide attack. Thanks to the magic shield there was no damage.....-! Vel!?)

Waving the Death Scythe to blow away the smoke, he searched for Vel's figure.

With his left arm missing and face melting away, Rei didn't think that Vel could escape. Still, he couldn't be careless until he was dead and quickly looked

around. He then heard a voice from where some smoke still remained.

「Hahahahaha. I-I was a bit careless.But this is not going to happen again.」

His face distorting due to the sharp pain in his left shoulder.....Vel declared so even as his face continued to fester and melt away.

With his remaining right hand, he grasped something like a gem in his hand and flung it onto the ground.....

「Don't run!」

He quickly checked the Misty Ring's inventory in his mind. Taking out the needle at the top of the list, he quickly threw it at Vel, who was trying to throw the gem to the ground.

That needle, which was thrown out with great speed, pierced through the air while dripping poison and stabbed into Vel's right thigh like a bird of prey diving for the kill.

Interestingly, the needle that Rei had thrown was the the needle Vel had given to Rei after he disarming a trap on the fifth floor of this dungeon, the undead floor.

「Damn, trying to the very end. But, I'm the winner of this game!」

With Rei's power, the poisoned needle pierced through the armour worn by Vel and stabbed into his right thigh, but the gem struck the ground without regard.....similar to the Golem from just before, no, even brighter than that, a dazzling flash occurred.

「Tch-, Set!」

「Gururu~!」

He didn't know what was happening but called out to Set to stop him from escaping.

Set responded to Rei's voice by shooting a wind arrow as Rei let off a flying slash.

But.....

「.....He's gone it seems.」

A dazzling flash lit up the surroundings. After the flash, Vel was nowhere to be seen. As far as evidence went that Vel had actually been there, the blood from when his left arm was cut was still on the ground and his left arm was rolling on the ground a short distance away.

At the back of the room, on the wall behind where Vel had been standing, there was a large scar and several smaller ones from where the Rei's flying slash and Set's wind arrows seemed to have hit.

What did Vel use, Rei came to a conclusion. Perhaps the gem that he had thrown to the ground contained a spatial magic. It allowed spatial movement, the so called transfer magic. There was no need to think about the rarity of item boxes, it was very difficult to apply spatial magic to such items. However, if profitability was ignored and it was a disposable single use item, then it might be possible with the Bestir Empire's technology.

(Still, only its alchemy is only on par with that the Magic City Osus.....or something.)

While breathing out, he judged that there was no more danger of having to fight the treacherous Vel and hurried towards Elena.

Placing his finger on her neck, he gave a sigh of relief after confirming her pulse. He then turned to look at Kuust, who was lying next to Elena.

「.....Kuust.」

Kuust had breathed his last, lying next to Elena. It was obvious based on his open eyes. However, he had a satisfied smile on his face. He probably passed on after confirming that Rei had repelled Vel.

「I didn't like him.There's no doubt about that. However, serving as an escort for Elena, he died performing his role. I will recognise that.」

Moving Kuust's arms over his chest, Rei removed Kuust's helmet and closed his eyes.

Most of the plate mail covering his body had been crushed by Rei's attack with the Death Scythe, the only remaining armour were his sabatons, gauntlets and the helmet that Rei had just removed.

「Guru～」

Rei disregarded Kuust like air, but Set was openly hostile. Still, seeing their previous exchange Set seemed to have noticed something. He gave a small cry as he watched Rei, as if giving a prayer for Kuust's soul.

「The problem is.....I wonder how the Inheritance Ceremony went.」

As he murmured, he turned to look at the Altar of Inheritance.

Originally, the magic stone of the Ancient Dragon should have been there, but it had been crushed by Vel's attack and had scattered.

Fortunately, about 70% had already been absorbed by Elena. However.....

(The goal of the Inheritance Ceremony is to absorb everything. What will be the result if she could only absorb 70%?)

He looked at the figure of the unconscious Elena. Even though she was unconscious and had her eyes closed, Elena still stood out as a beauty.

「Any how, I can't do anything if neither Ara or Elena wakes up. I also don't know if they can be moved away as it is.」

Since he didn't know how losing consciousness in the magic formations would affect the ceremony, Rei had no choice but to wait for them to wake up.

After taking out a clean cloth from the Misty Ring and covering Kuust with it, several hours passed.

「Mm.....」

The first to wake up was Ara and not Elena.

「.....You've woken up, Ara.」

「Rei.....-dono?」

Ara woke up and couldn't understand the situation for a moment as she looked around.

「-!? Elena-sama!?!」

Remembering the events before she lost consciousness, she quickly got up and looked around.

And finding the figure of Elena, who had fainted beside the Altar of Inheritance, she was about to rush over when Rei grabbed her hand.

「Ara!」

「Rei-dono, please let me go! Elena-sama!」

「Calm down! Elena had the Inheritance Ceremony forcibly stopped halfway! It's dangerous to move her body from the magic formation carelessly right now! I don't know what may happen!」

Ara glared at Rei with eyes mixed with blood lust, but she reacted at the words that Elena might be put in danger. She gradually controlled her overflowing blood lust.

「.....Pardon me.」

「Don't worry about it. I know how much you care for Elena so it is not unreasonable.」

Finally calming Ara, Rei took a bottle out of the Misty Ring. It was wine that he had bought in the city of Gimuru.

Rei didn't drink that much alcohol himself. Still, he enjoyed drinking to some extent. It was also for cases of emergency, and for times like these, that he had bought it.

Forcibly uncorking the bottle, he poured some wine into a cup and handed it to Ara.

「Drink this for now. It will calm you down.」

「.....Pardon me.」

Chibiri~, chibiri~. Ara drank the wine silently. Her face was listless, Rei could easily imagine how Vel's betrayal had felt. And.....

「That? Rei-dono, Vel betrayed us. I understand that.So then, Kuust? By any chance, Kuust.....」

Did Kuust betray us as well. As Ara tried to continue, Rei interrupted her and turned to look at Kuust's body, which was covered by a clean cloth.

「Guru~.....」

Set lay down on the ground and turned to look at Kuust's body as well as he

caught Rei's weight against him.

「Eh?such a thing, no.....it's a lie right!？」

Placing the cup she held with both hands onto the ground, she cautiously approached Kuust's body and gently lifted the cloth.

Although there was blood around his mouth, there was a satisfied smile on his face. The face of the dead Kuust could be said to be peaceful.

「Why.....why is this! Why is Kuust dead!」

Ara stuck the stone floor in violent fury. Cracks appeared in the stone pavings which should have been robust as broken fragments flew into the surroundings.

She continued to strike the ground for several minutes. Finally calming down, she wiped away her tears and turned to Rei.

「Rei-dono.....please tell me. Who did this.....was it Vel?」

「.....Ah.」

「Kuust.....how were his last moments?」

The skin on her hands had broken, blood was dripping and flesh was visible. But she clenched her hands tightly as if she didn't notice.....it wasn't just the back of her hands, her fingernails also cut into her palms and blood was dripping from there as well.

「After entering the dungeon, do you remember that Vel kept giving his water bottle to Kuust?」

「.....Yes.」

「It seems that the contents of the water bottle contained some magic potion. With the effect from the magic potion, Kuust became Vel's puppet.」

「Something like that! But Vel himself drank from that bottle!？」

「He seems to have prepared some sort of antidote. He also used a magic item that further raised Kuust's physical abilities before making him fight me.....」

As he muttered that, Ara looked at Rei with blood lust.

「Then, Rei-dono, who killed Kuust?」

While feeling a thirst for blood covering him, he shook his head.

「Even in that condition, my strength was higher than Kuust's, I hit him hard

once with the handle of the Death Scythe and destroyed the armour on his body. So, after that, I fought Vel to try to finish him off before Kuust came back.....and in the confusion of battle, Vel released a small Golem without me noticing. It's over there.」

Saying that, Rei looked at the figure of the Golem that had stopped working after having its body pierced by the dagger.

The Golem still held a long sword in its hands.

TLN: The sword should have been stuck in Kuust, so I have no idea why the Golem still has it.

「When that Golem tried to attack Elena, I don't know how Kuust did it, but he broke the restraint of the magic potion to protect Elena.....」

「But if Rei-dono's abilities were that great-!」

Ara uttered a cry as if she was spitting blood. However, she immediately stopped her condemning words.

Maybe she gripped her hands more tightly than before, the amount of blood dripping from them increased.

「.....No, it's not something that I, who fainted, can say anything about. Also, if you look at Kuust's face, I'm sure that he died peacefully. There's no meaning to blaming you for anything here. I will use these hands to strike him down.....I will destroy Vel.」

Rei took out a potion from the Misty Ring while watching Ara make that vow to herself with that determination.

「Please heal your injuries for now.」

「Yes, I'm sorry.」

Sprinkling the potion over her right hand, the injury on it healed in less than 30 seconds.

「So, what should we do with Elena-sama.」

After vowing to seek vengeance on Vel with her own hands, treating the injuries on her hands, and calming down, Ara turned to look at Elena, who still hadn't woken up, who was lying in at the center of the magic formation. Rei

shook his head.

「Since I don't know what kind of ceremony the Inheritance Ceremony is, I can't do anything. I have confirmed she has a pulse, so I think it's better for her to naturally wake up. Fortunately, there doesn't seem to be any monsters wandering the aisles in this lowest level.」

「But, doesn't that mean we could be waiting like this forever?」

「Ah well. I have plenty of food and monster flesh in my item box.....but I don't think sleeping here is good for our health.We'll wait for half a day, if she doesn't wake up by then, we'll have to take the risk and take her out.」

Rei took out an hourglass, which was a magic item, from the item box.

「This hourglass takes two hours for all the sand to fall. We will use this to time half a day, if Elena still doesn't wake up by then.....」

Realising what Rei wanted to say, Ara gave a small nod.

「I understand.」

Thus, they silently waited for time to pass.

Chapter 104

Rei and Ara kept quiet. Set merely closed his eyes and let Rei rest against him.

In the center of the magic formation before the two people and the single animal, Elena appeared as she was just sleeping until she woke up as the sand in the hourglass emptied for the fifth time.....that is, about ten hours.

「.....Mm.....」

「Elena-sama-!」

The voice of Elena, who had fallen unconscious at the center of the magic formation, quietly echoed through the silence around the Altar of Inheritance.

Ara reacted to that voice by immediately calling out to her. However, Rei grasped Ara's hand to stop her again.

「Rei-dono!」

「Calm down! Take a look at the surroundings!」

Ara tried to shout at him to let go, but gathered herself at Rei's unyielding voice.

Ara looked around at Rei's words.

「This is.....」

As Ara looked, the words stopped in her mouth as she saw what was happening before her.

The reason was the Altar of Inheritance, the altar next to Elena. The altar where Vel had broken the magic stone of the Ancient Dragon began to look hazy, as if it had never been there before.

The Altar of Inheritance and the three magic formations that surrounded it.And the magic formation that Elena had collapsed on. They all changed into a hazy form.....and the next moment, they were all sucked into Elena's body.

「Ara, is this a normal event for the Inheritance Ceremony?」

「N-no. I'm sorry, I'm not too familiar with the Inheritance Ceremony so.....」

「Really. It's worrying if we don't know if this is a normal event.」

When Rei muttered that.

「Don't worry. As I said before the ceremony, you can only do this once per Altar of Inheritance. This is why.」

At the former location of the magic formations, where not a single trace of them remained, Elena spoke out as she lifted herself off the stone floor.

「Elena-sama!」

Ara hugged Elena with tears in her eyes.

While watching them, Rei also walked towards Elena.

「How much do you remember?」

「.....Vel, was it.」

「Ah.」

「Up until the point that he destroyed the magic stone on the altar.」

Muttering, she looked around.....and stopped at the object covered by a cloth.

「.....Is it, Kuust?」

「Ah. He protected you from Vel's Golem.」

「I see.It was my mistake as a commander to not have noticed Vel's betrayal.」

Lifting the cloth covering Kuust's face, she closed her eyes for a few seconds to pray for his soul before turning her eyes to Rei.

「Rei, please put Kuust's body into the item box. At the very least, I want to deliver his body to his family.」

「I understand.」

Giving a small nod at Elena's request, he stored the body into the Misty Ring.

「.....So, what happened to the Inheritance Ceremony in the end? The magic stone that you were meant to absorb was destroyed by Vel part way through.」

「Wait a moment.」

She replied before closing her eyes to check her body's condition.

「.....Although it can't be said that I've completely inherited the power of the

Ancient Dragon, but I have received about 70%.」

「About 70%. I don't know if that's a lot or a little.」

「It's not a bad result considering the ceremony was interrupted half way. The worst case would have been if the Altar of Inheritance had been destroyed, the magic stone of the Ancient Dragon would also have been destroyed and I wouldn't have gotten anything out of it. Even taking that into consideration, Kuust still died. Vel's failure was in destroying the magic stone and not the altar. In the Inheritance Ceremony, the altar is more important than the magic stone.Vel Sails. I will definitely pay you back for this.」

Elena only murmured the last part. Her eyes showed a strong determination and, at the same time, a look of a hunter aiming at their prey.

「Elena-sama, after you inherited the power of the Ancient Dragon.....what has changed specifically? At the very least, Elena-sama still looks the same.」

At Ara's timid question, Elena stroked her head as she smiled, erasing the the ferocious atmosphere she had just a few seconds ago.

「That's right. If the ritual had failed due to Vel's interference, I cannot reject the possibility that I would have lost my human appearance and turned into a Dragon. However, you don't need to worry. Fortunately, it seems I have acquired the physical strength and magical power of the Ancient Dragon while retaining my human form.It's impossible right now, but it may be possible for me to use some basic Dragon Language magic as well.」

When she clenched her right hand, Elena unconsciously radiated magic power into the surroundings.

The amount of magic power was clearly greater than what Elena had before the ceremony. Even Rei, who didn't have the ability to see magic power, could understand the difference.

「.....That's enough about me. Rei, can you explain in detail what happened after I fainted?」

Elena erased the magic power she had released and turned to look at Rei. Receiving her gaze, Rei nodded and described the events in more detail than when he had told Ara.

「I see. So Kuust died peacefully.」

「Ah. There was no doubt I disliked him, but he still died protecting what he had to protect as a knight.」

「.....I see. Then I will have live up to being the person he died satisfied for.」

「Elena-sama.....」

Elena nodded with a light smile as Ara looked at her anxiously. Her mood then changed as she turned to look to the exit of the room.

Rei spoke up as he watched Elena.

「Now that the ceremony is over, we have to get out of the dungeon.....three people, is it. Thinking about the time we came down, this might be a little tough.」

At Rei's mutterings, Elena shook her head with a smile.

「Without Vel and Kuust, it definitely is a problem. However, my current strength is much greater than before. The Silver Lion protecting the dungeon nucleus would be impossible, but if it's an A rank monster, I can probably deal with it on my own.」

Elena muttered as she grasped the handle of her sword whip.

Elena certainly felt more powerful than before the ceremony. With her beauty that seemed to draw in observers, Rei had the impression that she had become a greater existence.

「If Elena says so then it's fine. If we go back right now, there's a possibility the sixth level hadn't resummoned a boss monster yet.」

「Alright, let's go. Regarding the formation, Rei and Set will take the vanguard. Ara will take the rear guard with me. We will leave this dungeon as soon as possible, I have to inform my father about Vel's betrayal.I also want to return Kuust's body to his family.」

「Wherever Elena-sama goes, I will accompany you!」

Ara declared that and Set gave a cry in agreement as they left the Altar of Inheritance.

「Gyan~.」

A group of 3 Emerald Wolves appeared as soon as they entered the sixth level. The monsters attacked Rei as soon as they saw him and Set immediately used King's Awe to slow them down.

The Emerald Wolves with dulled movements were sitting ducks for Rei and Elena. Before Ara could move, Set crushed the skull of one of the wolves with his forefeet.....all the enemies were killed literally 30 seconds after they attacked.

「Hm, I haven't familiarised myself to my body yet.」

Elena muttered as she swung her sword whip to flick off the blood after she had cut the neck of an Emerald Wolf as she dodged its attack.

From her displeased look, you could tell that she was dissatisfied that she couldn't fully utilise her new power.

「But Elena-sama, that was amazing. Your reaction speed to enemy attacks and the power when you swung your sword whip as well.」

Elena shook her head with a smile at Ara's words.

「No,I have the impression that I can't fully control the power I have gained yet. I will have to train from the beginning after I leave the dungeon. Time is precious right now. Let's continue.」

「I see, should I say fortunately or unfortunately, the traps released by Vel haven't been restored yet. Whether this is the work of the dungeon nucleus or other monsters, I don't know. But either way, I want to get as far as we can before they are restored.」

While replying to Elena's words, Rei quickly stored the bodies of the 3 Emerald Wolves into the Misty Ring.

「Alright, let's go!」

Nodding at Rei's words, the party started to run. They matched their speed to Ara's, who was the slowest compared to Set, who was a Griffon, Rei, whose physical ability was outside the norm and Elena, who had inherited the power of an Ancient Dragon. However, their speed was still faster than that of an ordinary person.

In addition, although the sixth floor had been filled with traps when they had first arrived, as Rei had said, the traps released by Vel hadn't been restored yet. It was a big help and allowed them to run right through.

The few monster that appeared along the way were slashed, burned and crushed to pieces by Rei, Set and Elena as they went through the dungeon.

「I see the stairs!」

Ara gave a sigh of relief as she said that when the stairs to the fifth floor came into sight. However, they then had a depressed expression as they remembered what kind of place the fifth level was.

「.....This is, hard.....」

Elena muttered as she climbed up to the fifth level.

Not only were Elena's physical abilities strengthened, her five senses had been strengthened as well. The stench that spread around the fifth floor hit her like it hit Rei and Set.

「You'll get used to it, that's all I can say.」

「Guru~」

As Rei frowned at the putrid odour, he said it with a look of resignation. Set gave a cry as if in agreement.

The one with the sharpest senses in the party was Set, so the damage he took from the smell was considerable as well.

「Well, I don't think it smells that bad.」

Ara, who was the only person with the five senses of an ordinary human, tilted her head slightly and muttered.

「There's no helping the smell, the issue is how to get through this level..」

Despite saying that, Elena frowned her eyes as if she couldn't bear the smell as she spoke up.

「What's the matter, what happened?」

Ara asked Elena, not understanding what she was trying to say. Rei spoke up with a bitter smile.

「When we came down to the sixth floor, we went through the back space where the owner of the voice used his power to link the staircase. In other words, unlike the sixth and seventh levels, we didn't go through this level by ourselves, so I have no idea where the stairs to the fourth level are.」

「.....Ah!」

Thinking about Rei's words for a moment, Ara gave a cry as she realised what he was saying.

「T-Then what do we do!?!」

「There's nothing we can do, wait, be quiet for a bit.....no, maybe?」

At the same time, Rei remembered the pair of orbs, the magic item he had received from Grimm.

If he could contact Grimm and ask him to use spatial magic, it might be possible for them to be sent to the surface.

(But.....)

Using the pair of orbs would mean revealing his relationship with Grimm.

「Rei-dono?」

Ara called out to Rei.

Shaking his head as if it was nothing.....he remembered that aside from himself, there were three others here, Set, Elena and Ara.

Yes. In other words, Vel, the traitor, and Kuust, who disliked him, weren't here. The only people left were Elena and Ara, who would unconditionally follow Elena because of her respect for Elena.

(In that case, could I just keep them quiet about it with 『Seed of Contract』? Anyhow, with the matter of Vel and Kuust, I wasn't able to use 『Seed of Contract』 at the Altar of Inheritance.)

「Set, watch the surroundings. Elena, I need to talk with you.」

「Gururu~」

Rei asked Set to watch the surroundings before calling Elena.

Elena came closer while tilting her head at the sudden call.

「What's wrong? I don't want to waste too much time as I want to return to the surface as soon as possible.」

「It's about that. If it goes well, we might be able to return to the surface immediately.....there may be such a method.」

「.....What?」

「However, to use that method, I need to show various things that I want to hide.Do you remember the 『Seed of Contract』 we talked about on the fourth floor?」

「Ah. That reminds me, due to various circumstances we still haven't received that magic. It was a very painful mistake that I let Vel escape before you could use that magic.Do you want to use it now?」

Rei gave a small nod at Elena's words.

Seeing that, she understood that it was a serious issue. Elena waited for Rei to continue.

「I will change what will activate the magic from any information about Set to saying anything that would be disadvantageous to me or Set, I think with this you can get out of the dungeon much faster than normal.What will you do?」

Saying up to there, Rei stayed silent to let her decide.

(Though it certainly is bad that I couldn't use 『Seed of Contract』 on Vel, it's fortunate that the Magic Beast Art's ability to absorb magic stones wasn't revealed. It's also good that knowledge on Griffons is rare.)

Muttering in his mind, he waited for Elena's reply.

Holding her chin with her hand and thinking for about 10 seconds as she looked at Rei.....Elena spoke up.

Chapter 105

Rei told her that if he extended the restrictions of the 『Seed of Contract』 to any information that would be disadvantageous to him or Set, they could leave the dungeon faster than normal. Elena listened before speaking out.

「That's fine, I need a fast solution right now. Even a few hours is valuable. It's not too bad to accept your proposal.However, at the very least I would like you to explain the effects of 『Seed of Contract』」

「As for me, I will do as Elena-sama says.」

Hearing from both of them, Rei spoke up.

「With 『Seed of Contract』, when the oath the spell was cast with is broken, it will literally cause a flower of fire to bloom inside your body, burning you alive. Of course, the magic is not invoked if oath you made during the spell is not broken. At the same time, those who have a Seed of Contract in them will have increased resistance to heat and flames. If you can use magic, the magic power you need to use will also decrease. It also has the additional effect of increasing its power.」

After hearing the effect of 『Seed of Contract』 from Rei, Elena closed her eyes for several seconds to think before nodding.

「That's fine. In the first place I already promised in my name that I would accept the 『Seed of Contract』 on the fourth level. Even if the content that I'm not allowed to talk about is increased, right now, it's important that I leave the dungeon as soon as possible to inform my father about the betrayal of Vel and the Sails Viscount house.」

「I don't have any problems. Of course, I don't plant to go against Elena-sama's previous promise to Rei.」

Seeing the both of them nod, Rei had a relieved expression.

「If that is so, I would like to use 『Seed of Contract』 immediately, are you fine with that?」

「Ah, do it.」

「Elena-sama, I'll go first.....」

「It's fine. I trust Rei, I don't think he will do anything strange here.」

「.....I understand.」

Elena nodded and Ara nodded back.

Rei confirmed that and started to say the incantation as he gathered magic power.

『Flame, thou is a seed. If the host breaks the contract, use their life to bloom into flames in glory.』

As Rei cast the spell, flames appeared along the handle of the Death Scythe, which acted as a magic casting tool. After a few seconds, the originally fist sized flames were compressed down to the size of a flower seed

Touching the handle of the Death Scythe against Elena's head.....

『Seed of Contract.』

At the same time the magic was activated, the flame seed sunk into Elena's head.

「This is.....」

Elena murmured at the unfamiliar feeling of the flame seed being placed in her head. However, the sense of incompatibility disappeared in a few seconds, it felt as if the 『Seed of Contract』 that had been placed inside her head was just a dream.

「The magic is placed.....is it?」

「Ahh, it was completed without any problems. Next is Ara.」

Because Elena had accepted the 『Seed of Contract』, Ara nodded and silently approached Rei without looking nervous.

「Please, I'm ready.」

Nodding at those words, he placed a 『Seed of Contract』 in her head, the same as with Elena.

「.....Now then, with this, Ara and I cannot tell others anything that might be disadvantageous to you. Can you now tell us the way to get out of this dungeon

quickly?」

「Ah. You kept your promise. I will keep mine as well.」

Giving a small nod to Elena, he took the orb out of the Misty Ring

Their eyes gathered at the fist sized crystal ball that appeared in Rei's hands from nowhere.

「That is?」

「This pair of orbs is a magic item. As its name implies, you can use it to contact the other orb it is paired with.」

While explaining that to Elena, Rei poured magic power into the orb in his hand. Then.....

『Oh, I was thinking it was Rei. You contacted me quite quickly.....』

About a few seconds later, the figure of a Skeleton wearing a crown was reflected in the orb in Rei's hands.

It was the Lich Lord Grimm, the old mage who had aspired to reach Zepairu's level.

「This voice is.....」

Even without looking at the face, the voice that echoed in her head sounded familiar. Elena muttered unconsciously.

「Ah. It was in the back space we strayed into here on the fifth level.」

Answering Elena, he turned to face the orb.

「I hadn't planned to contact you so soon, but we have some circumstances. I would like to borrow your help since you can use spatial magic.」

『Borrow my help is it.....that's fine. From the reaction of the pair of orbs, you're on in the fifth level?』

「Ah.」

『Hmm, please wait a moment.』

Just as he said that, his figure disappeared.

「Rei, previously.....no, I don't have the time to listed to the details. However, you will explain it in detail later.」

『Hahaha. Please don't bully Rei that much.』

This time, his voice wasn't heard through the orb like several seconds ago but instead was heard directly in their heads. Even though Ara didn't understand the conversation between Elena and Rei, she immediately understood when she heard the voice.

「T-This is!?!」

Grimm immediately appeared next to them without any signs. A crown resting on top of a bare skull. A staff grasped in his right hand. And above all, his overwhelming presence. Ara instinctively realised with a single look that she couldn't beat him. However, to protect Elena she would make even a single attack.....as she grasped the Power Axe, Rei spoke out.

「Grimm, your presence is a bit too strong. Please hold back a little.」

『Oh, I keep forgetting. If you live alone as a researcher, you start to have trouble interacting with other people.』

Smiling wryly at the three people and one animal, the pressure that Grimm released disappeared.

「So, we would like to use spatial magic to take out out of the dungeon.....no, that would be awkward if it's seen. Please send us to somewhere on the first level where there aren't that many people. Could you do that?」

『That's fine.....hmm, there are no problems. Fortunately, there seems to be almost no one on the first level at the moment.』

「.....Grimm-dono, is it. Did you just check how many people there were on the first level in that moment?」

『Umu~. The difficulty is not that great.....mm? I see, you're the one who received the Inheritance Ceremony.』

Grimm answered as he observed Elena for a few seconds.

「Yes. Various things happened during the ceremony and I want to return to the surface as soon as possible.Grimm-dono used a rare magic when we were heading for the Altar of Inheritance. Please, I would like to borrow your power once more.」

Elena gave a deep bow and one moment later.....

『Kukuku!. Hahahaha! Interesting. You, bowing your head at a monster that you would normally subjugate and kill without hesitation. The previous time was good and this time was good, Rei's companions are pleasant.That's fine, I can't refuse a request from someone close to Rei.』

As a hearty and amused laughter echoed in their heads, Grimm shook the staff in his right hand.

The space a short distance away from Rei began to distort.

『This should be fine. If you enter this space, it will automatically move you the first level of the dungeon.』

(Using this magic without even saying any incantations.....also.....)

While thinking that in her mind, Elena bowed her head again after seeing the distortion.

『Thank you very much. Someday I will repay this kindness.』

『Well, we might meet again if we have the opportunity. Then, I should return to my laboratory soon. Ah, that space will disappear in a few minutes so you better get going soon.』

『.....Thanks.』

『Guru~』

Although Rei wasn't used to it, he gave a bow. Next to him Set also lowered his head a little. After Grimm saw that, the sound of laughter echoed through Rei's head again.

『Just now, was that real?』

Several seconds after Grimm disappeared, Ara murmured as her hands holding the Power Axe shook.

Opposite her had been someone in a completely different ballpark. Furthermore Ara had been exposed to the smell of death and darkness from the magic power that had leaked out and was mentally exhausted.

『It was real. Otherwise the space distortion there can't be explained.If what Grimm-dono said is right, then this space distortion won't remain for long. We should hurry.』

「Please wait! That Lich.....that is, is it really okay to trust him?」

Ara asked Elena, who was about to take a step towards the space distortion.

No, she was asking Rei rather than Elena. It was natural since it was Rei who had contacted Grimm.

「At the very least, I trust Grimm. In fact, he spared me one of the pair of orbs, an expensive magic item. And you also understood Grimm's abilities? The difference in our abilities is something we can't comprehend.」

「That's.....」

「To be honest, even if Set and I worked together, we probably can't beat Grimm. That's the difference in ability between him and us. If he wanted to do something to us, he doesn't need to go to such troublesome lengths to do it.」

「.....」

Ara did not reply to Rei's words and stayed silent.

But her eyes clearly showed she wasn't convinced.

As she looked at Rei strongly, Elena put her hand on Ara's shoulder.

「Elena-sama.....」

「Ara. You saw Vel's betrayal, and seeing that Kuust died because of it, I understand that don't believe others so easily. However, as Rei said before, with Grimm-dono's power, he doesn't need to play such tricks.In addition, I don't see Grimm-dono as a person who deceives people. Isn't that right, Rei?」

「.....Ah.」

Though she nodded at Elena's words, she still had some doubts.

(Elena has only met him for the first time.....she can believe Grimm's abilities, who is a Lich Lord? Also, not much time has passed since Vel's betrayal.)

As Rei thought that in his mind, Ara was finally persuaded by Elena and nodded as she turned to look at Elena.

「I understand that Elena-sama believes in that Lich.However, in case there is a possibility, I will enter the space distortion first.」

「I understand. If you're satisfied, I won't say anything more. I'll leave it to you.」

「Yes.」

Nodding at Elena's words, she firmly held the Power Axe with both hands and turned her eyes to the space distortion.

After preparing herself for a few seconds, she opened her mouth to speak.

「I'm going!」

With a shout, she dashed forward into the space distortion.....and disappeared from the fifth level.

「Okay, there looks like there are no problems. Rei, shall we go as well?」
「Ah.」

Nodding at Elena's words, the three of them walked towards the space distortion.

「This is.....definitely the first level.」

Leaving the space distortion, Elena murmured as she looked around.

「It seems to be so.What about Ara?」

Rei answered Elena as he looked around before noticing that Ara, who should have entered the space distortion first, was nowhere to be found.

As he muttered that.

「Ah, I'm sorry. I got a bit carried away and went too far.」

As Ara appeared from the passage ahead and came towards them quickly, Elena involuntarily gave a smile.

「Well then, let's quickly get out of the dungeon. I think this place is only 10 minutes from the entrance to the dungeon.」

「That's right, if you take a turn at the passage and go straight ahead, there is a stairway that goes to the surface.」

Although they had entered the dungeon just a few days ago, it felt like it had been several months as Rei remembered the time they had gone through here. Elena felt the same way and gave a small nod before walking in the direction that Rei had said earlier.

Changing location to somewhere a few kilometers away from the dungeon.

In a place where monsters would normally control, about ten people had built

a camp.

Rather than camping here overnight, it had been several days since they had built there camp. Those actions would normally be suicidal. But, even if you said that there were less monsters around because it was near a dungeon, it was probably because the ten people were quite skilled.

And if someone saw then, those people would probably run to the adventurers guild as fast as they could. Most out of the ten people had faces made of rock, like Golems, feet like the roots of plants or had several eyes on their face. Their appearances could not be thought of as human.

In situation, one of them, who seemed to be the leader, raised their head.

He wore a robe and held a cane, he had the appearance of a human mage if only saw his upper body. However, his lower body was that of a spider. It looked just like the monster known as Arachne, but it was obvious that he wasn't an Arachne because his upper body was that of a man.

「.....He's come.」

When the strange mage muttered that, the other irregulars in the surroundings also turned to look at the magic formation at the center of the camp.

If the higher ups of the Mireana Kingdom saw the existence of those people, they would immediately guess who they were. They were the so called Demon Soldiers created by the Inheritance Ceremony of the Bestir Empire. As their name suggested, though their appearances varied, they looked more like monsters than people.

A few seconds after the strange mage said that, the magic formation at the center of the camp glowed brightly for a moment.....The next moment, a human appeared in the center of the magic formation.

「The assassination of the General Princess has failed. Was it a mistake to expect better from a traitor?Incompetent fool.」

Before him was the figure of Vel, missing an arm from his left shoulder, his face melted away and a sharp needle piercing his thigh. The strange mage muttered in contempt as he gazed at Vel.

「We will retreat. If we could assassinate the General Princess, I had planned to attack the village around the dungeon as well. But since it has failed, staying any longer is of no use.」

「What do we do with this idiot?」

At that question, he turned to a man who had gills growing from the sides of his face and was covered in scales before looking back again to the man lying in the magic formation.

If left alone for a few hours, that weak being would probably die. But although temporary, that being had sworn allegiance to the Bestir Empire. Rather than leaving him here, he judged that they might get some useful information if they took him along.

「We will take him. Even if he doesn't have any useful information, he can still be used as material in human experiments.」

「I understand.」

Following the instructions of the strange mage, their leader, the Demon Soldiers gave some first aid to the unconscious Vel before quickly preparing for their return to the Bestir Empire.

Chapter 106

「Ah, you.....you're safe.」

A voice called out to Elena and the others when they left the dungeon.

Looking at where the voice came from, it was the same guild staff member as when they had entered the dungeon.

However, seeing that the number of people in Elena's party had decreased, he shook his head slightly with an apologetic look.

「I'm sorry that some of your party members have died.Do you mind if I contact the guild to tell them you've come out?」

「Ah. I don't mind. However, we have something we have to do as soon as possible. Please tell them that we don't have enough time to go to the guild.」

「I understand. That is.....what to say. Don't be too discouraged. You entered the dungeon and stayed there overnight. You should think that you were lucky for not getting wiped out.」

「Thank you for your concern. If anything comes up urgently, you can come to our inn, I will handle it.」

Informing the guild staff member, Elena and the others left the place.

Originally, they had wanted to get to the inn as fast as they could. However, with Elena's looks and Set, a Griffon, an A rank monster, they couldn't stop attracting attention. But as there was only one such person and animal known around the area, although they gathered attention, panic did not spread into the surroundings.

If Rei had held his Death Scythe in his hands, they would have been even more conspicuous.

They walked quickly down the road for about 15 minutes and eventually arrived at the inn Elena had booked previously.

「Ah, everyone! You're safe.....no, that is.」

Linde, who had been employed by the inn for chores called out with a bright

face when he saw Rei and Set. However, he immediately noticed that the number of people had decreased and began to talk vaguely.

Elena smiled at Linde and spoke to him while stroking his head.

「What, you don't have to worry about it so much. Tell the innkeeper to get ready to send a letter off as soon as possible.」

「Y-Yes!」

When Elena, the most beautiful woman he had ever met in his life, said that to him, Linde ran to the inn in a hurry with his face dyed red. Rei stroked Set's back and spoke up as he watched Linde go.

「I will take Set to the stables.」

「Ah. Because I have to write a letter about Vel's matter to send to my father immediately, I'll be busy for a while. In the meantime please relax yourself.」

Rei nodded at those words before heading to the stables with Set. Seeing him leave, Elena turned to Ara.

「Ara, you too. Because I'll be busy for a while, take a break.」

「.....Originally, I had wanted Elena-sama to take a break since you just finished the Inheritance ceremony.」

「What, after I send the letter, I will take a break as well.」

Saying that, she looked around to check if there was anyone nearby before continuing.

「Even though it's not perfect, I inherited the power of the Ancient Dragon and immediately left the dungeon. As expected, I'm tired.」

「Still, the fact is that Elena-sama is still safe.Kuust should have also been here.....」

The sound of grinding teeth could be heard in the surroundings.

Elena tapped Ara's shoulder lightly to calm her down.

「That's right. Mireana Kingdom.....he will certainly receive his dues for betraying us. The reason while Viscount Sails' house betrayed us in the first place was because they judged that the kingdom stood no chance in the next war. Then let's show Vel that his judgement was wrong.」

「Yes. I will accompany you at that time.」

「.....Well, even if I say that, he won't necessarily appear on the front lines.」

Muttering, she remembered the story she had heard from Rei.

Vel had lost his left arm, had his face melted off by the liquid he had prepared himself and had his thigh stabbed by the poisoned needle they had found in the dungeon.

Still, if Vel's state was as Rei had said, he would eventually appear again. However, they didn't know how long it would be for his body to return to its original state.

「Now then, time is precious. I have to send a letter to my father at once. If we are lucky, we may be able to do something within the kingdom before the Viscount Sails' house escapes.」

「I agree. Then, as soon as you finish writing the letter, I will bring it to a summoner or someone who has tamed birds to send it right away.....」

「Yes, you can rest a bit. You've just returned from the dungeon, even if you have confidence in your physical strength, taking breaks is still necessary.」

At Elena's words, she grasped the Power Axe in her hands.

「It's okay. If I have this Power Axe, I won't run out of stamina!」

「Relying on magic items to recover your strength is actually forcibly restoring your stamina. I won't say it's bad for your body, but I can't tell if it's a good thing or not. Besides that Power Axe was borrowed from Rei. Don't forget that we have to return it eventually.」

Hearing Elena's words, Ara was surprised before she calmed down and turned to look at the Power Axe in her hands.

Because it had felt so familiar in her hands, it seemed that she had forgotten that she had only been borrowing it.

「.....Now that you say it, this was borrowed wasn't it.」

At that, Elena smiled at Ara, who was looking like a child holding onto her favourite toy.

「What, if you like it, I can negotiate with Rei to give it to us. Naturally, for

such an item, compensation is necessary. Looking at you, you seem to have forgotten that you had borrowed it.」

「Yes, please ask if possible.」

The commander and subordinate nodded at each other and headed into the inn.

At that time, Rei and Set were near the stables behind the inn.

「Guru～」

Behind the stables, they relaxed themselves beside a tree as they did absolutely nothing.

Set lay down on the grass that grew around the trees while Rei leaned against Set and closed his eyes while stroking Set's head.

「Well, this request, somehow we completed it.....should I say.」

As he closed his eyes, he muttered quietly.

The contents of the request were that he had to escort the only daughter of Duke Kerebel, Elena, who was renowned as the General Princess. He could say that at the very least, his escort request had been completed.

But there had been a traitor in the party. He hadn't been close with the traitor, to be exact the traitor had just treated him as a necessary existence, but it had cause a party member to die.

(Stronger.....I must get stronger.)

Murmuring in his mind, his consciousness was swallowed up by darkness due to his drowsiness and fatigue.

「Okay, this letter is fine.」

Elena muttered and reread the letter one last time before placing it into an envelope.

「As for Ara.....ah, as expected.」

Ara had insisted on waiting until Elena had finished writing her letter. However, as expected, it was difficult for her to resist the fatigue from the dungeon. Her hands had let go of her important Power Axe and she had fallen

asleep on the bed while unconsciously smiling.

She was a subordinate and friend who had followed her through many ups and downs. There was no doubt that Elena appreciated Ara greatly. For Elena, who was a Duke's daughter, Ara was a precious person to her.

(.....Kuust, I will definitely avenge you with these hands. That is what I should do as your commander.)

To be honest, it was sometime frustrating when she felt Kuust's similar feelings of adoration towards her. However, it was evidence that he admired her greatly. He was a typical noble who wouldn't place others in his eyes if they weren't nobles as well, which cause various problems. But nevertheless, in a place like this.....moreover, by a fellow companion he had spent time with, he had been manipulated and killed.

「No, this is not the time to immerse myself in sentiment. I have to send this letter as soon as possible.」

Muttering, she paid the owner of the inn 5 gold coins and asked him to give it to a summoner.

In this era, aside from the magic items that connected the guilds, most correspondence was done mainly through letters. For that reason, in most high class inns, they often had a person who could use summoning magic in order to deliver letters speedily.

This inn was in a village that was built around a dungeon, a village that was almost the size of a town. Because of this, it was sometimes necessary for big merchants and nobles who visited the dungeon for goods to make urgent contact with someone. In such a case, monsters that could fly or birds of prey that had been summoned or tamed would be tasked to deliver the letters. Of course, because this serviced required a mage that could send out a monster, it was quite an expensive service that ordinary adventurers couldn't use.

Still, most of the time, it would cost one gold coin at most. However, this time, Elena paid five gold coins. It was because she had requested a high level summoner to deliver it urgently that she had paid such an absurd amount.

「Now then, the letter, which was the largest problem, is done. If that's the

case, I should rest for a little while as well.....hmm?」

While stretching, she suddenly saw the figures of a person and an animal as she looked out the window. She immediately realised who it was. They had worked with each other for some time. Although she hadn't completed the Inheritance Ceremony perfectly, she had still inherited the power of the Ancient Dragon. Naturally, her eyesight was much sharper than before.

「.....」

After thinking for several seconds, she gave a small smile before walking out with just a cloak instead of her armour.

As she walked towards the, maybe he heard a sound, Set opened his eyes slightly.

However, seeing that it was Elena who was coming over, he went back to sleep.

Seeing that, she felt delighted at knowing that Set trusted her to a certain extent as she sat down several steps away from Set and Rei.

(The wind is cool. It's already autumn.....)

The summer heat was changing to the cool autumn. As her golden hair swayed in the wind, she turned to look at Rei, who was sleeping as he leaned against Set.

Although he was younger than her by 5 years, his strength was something that couldn't be measured by common sense.

(And.....)

Murmuring in her heart, she gently approached the sleeping Rei,

The hood of his robe had been taken off to stop it from getting in the way as he slept. Red.....his hair, that could only be called a fiery red, was clearly visible.

His now close eyes were a pure blue, like azure, strongly contrasting the colour of his hair.

Still, if you just considered his face, it wasn't something that clearly attracted her eyes as Elena had become used to such things after interacting with nobles

for so long.

「But.....」

With a small murmur, she gently stretched out her hands and stroked Rei's crimson hair as he slept.

(.....What?)

As Rei slept, wrapped up by Set's silky fur, he felt someone gently stroking him and woke up.

(Set.....is it?)

He thought it felt a bit strange for Set to stroke him with his wings and he opened his eyes.....and in front of him was Elena's beautiful face.

「Elena?」

「Oh, I'm sorry. You've woken up.」

「I don't mind but.....」

While muttering, Rei was surprised that Set hadn't done anything even after she had come so close.

TLN: Attaboy Set XD

He got up as he leaned against Set and looked at the surroundings.

Should he say fortunately or unfortunately, there was no one other than Elena nearby. Because of that, he understood why Set hadn't been particularly cautious.

「Letter.....」

「Yes?」

「No, what about the letter? You told me that you had to send a letter to Duke Kerebel.」

At Rei's question, Elena nodded as she stroked Set's silky fur.

「Ah. I've already sent that to my father. One of the things this inn boasts of is that they can summon a bird with four wings to promptly deliver letters. Although it isn't that much colder, it will be autumn soon. If you sleep outside like this, you will catch a cold.」

「My body isn't that weak that I will catch a cold from this, there's also Set.」

「It's certainly true that Set's body temperature and fur coat are wonderful..... ah, that's right. Changing the subject, but remember the magic item, the Power Axe, that you lent to Ara? It seems that she likes it greatly. If possible, could you give it to us.....how about it?」

「How about it? Even if you say that. In the first place, I'm not an axe wielder. And because there's no one else in my party, I don't mind if you want it. But as expected, I can't just hand it to you for free?」

Elena nodded with a wry smile at Rei's words.

「Of course. I didn't mean that you had to just hand it over. Naturally, I will pay accordingly. How about two platinum coins?」

Rei thought for a few seconds at Elena's words.

Talking about two platinum coins, it was a large sum of money to adventurers.

With that much money, it was probably enough to buy higher quality magic items.

「Isn't that a bit too much?」

「This time, a lot of things happened. I don't want to see Ara being too depressed. In addition, because Ara and I have received a lot of help from you, consider it to be a gift.」

「.....Well, in that case, I don't mind.」

Originally, he had won it from the Claws of the Hawk, it was a weapon that he had completely forgotten that he had stored into the Misty Ring until now. He nodded as there were no particular problems even if he gave it away.

「I see. Thank you.」

With a bright smile, Elena handed him two platinum coins from her pouch. As he held his hand out to receive them.....the next moment, Elena grasped his hand and looked at his palm.

「Elena?」

「.....This hand.」

「What happened to my hand?」

「It's the same as my hand.I can't believe that this hand is the hand of an

artificial body at all.」

At the words Elena murmured, Rei had an expression of unexpected surprise.

Chapter 107

As Rei and Elena were talking behind the inn, Rei has an expression of surprise at the sudden mention of 『Artificial Body』.

「.....Where did you hear that from?」

Rei slowly took his hand out of the grasp of Elena's smooth hands.

Rei longer held an expression of surprise and instead looked her in the eyes to ascertain her motive.

However, although Rei looked at her, Elena remained unperturbed as she shook her head slightly.

「Don't worry. I don't plan to say anything about the matter.In addition, a 『Seed of Contract』 has been placed in my body. You would understand best that I can't say anything that may disadvantage you right?」

When Elena mentioned the 『Seed of Contract』, his mind, which had been previously half asleep, finally started working as he loosened his expression as he spoke up.

「Then, it was the first time we saw Grimm.」

「That's right. Everyone else other than Rei and Set had been stopped by Grimm's time magic, but should I say fortunately for me, I kept my consciousness. That is why was able to hear the story then. I think it was because of the magic stone of the Ancient Dragon I had on me that I resisted the effect of Grimm-dono's magic.」

「.....I see.」

He nodded at Elena's explanation while leaning against Set with a sigh.

Normally, he would have needed to do something to silence her, but since 『Seed of Contract』 had already been used, she was already silenced. Because of that, Rei judged that there was no need to do anything more.

「.....So, since you know, what do you plan to do?」

「I don't plan to do anything differently. However.....well, if it's fine, I would

hear about Rei's world.」

Rei had a surprised expression when Elena spoke about it as if it were nothing.

「You're fine with that? More like, for example, you don't want the Power Axe for free or that I give another magic item?」

「.....Rei, I'm troubled that you would think that of me. Do I seem like a person who would take advantage of someone's weakness to gain their possessions?」

At the power of Elena's slight glare, Rei unconsciously tried to retreat. But since he was leaning against Set, he was unable to do so and eventually just stayed quiet as Elena glared at him.

After being glared at by Elena for several seconds, Rei raised his hands in surrender as he spoke up.

「I'm sorry. It was certainly my mistake. I didn't intend to insult you. Please forgive me.」

「Hmm, it was unexpected that you thought of me as such a person.Well, it's fine. Still, that means that Rei's story about being a mage's disciple was a complete lie.」

「That's right. However, I was reborn in this artificial body after my soul was pulled from another world.....even if I talked about it, would you believe me?」

That would be impossible, Elena nodded at Rei, who was smiling ironically.

「That is probably true. Even for me, I wouldn't have believed it if I hadn't heard the story from Rei and Grimm-dono back then. Also, more so because it was the Majin called Zepairu that saved Rei's soul and sent it to this world.」

「I never thought that thousands of years would have passed in this world since Zepairu died. Though I inherited his knowledge, most of it has become useless after thousands of years.」

He murmured while stroking Set's back as he leaned against him like a sofa.

「That would be so. There are few things that wouldn't change after thousands of years.By the way, since you being a mage's apprentice is a lie, could the magic item you're wearing possibly be.....」

Rei nodded at Elena, who had asked the question cautiously.

「Ah. Dragon Robe, Shoes of Sleipnir, Bracelet of Magic Absorption.And, Misty Ring, the item box. All these were made by Esta Nord, the alchemist of Zepairu's organisation.」

「To think that, well.....do you know? That he is said to be the greatest alchemist of all time? The highest level of the Magic City Osus, which currently holds the best alchemists in the world, are said to be the descendants of his partner and his students.」

「That is probably a lie.」

At those words, Elena had no idea what to say.

「What do you mean?」

「As I said earlier, I gained all of Zepairu's knowledge. If he had the time to nurture disciples, Esta Nord was someone who would rather spend the time concentrating on his research. With such a personality, he did not marry in his life.Well, I only know about Esta Nord after he entered Zepairu's organisation. There is a possibility he had taken disciples earlier or that they are descendants of his blood relatives, so it's not impossible.」

「.....My view of that legendary person just got ruined by you Rei.」

Originally, he had been exalted as a great man from the past, Elena had a bitter smile as she thought about his unexpected character.

Like that, the two of them talked for about an hour before they saw a petite figure come towards them from the inn. It was Linde, who was in charge of the inn chores.

「Elena-sama, you have some guests.」

Knowing that the other party was a noble, though his cheeks went red at Elena's beautiful face, he still spoke in a polite tone.

「Guests?」

「Yes. Walker-sama from the guild would like to listen to your story.」

At those words, she remembered that the guild staff member at the dungeon had said that he would contact the guild.

「That reminds me that was so.For the person in charge to come, that was unexpected for him to be able to move so easily.」

「Well, he's still young.」

「.....There's no doubt he's older than the both of us. What will you do Rei? Would you like to come with us?」

「No, that's too troublesome for me. I'll take it slow today and rest my body.」

With a smile, he waved his hands while leaning against Set.

「Fuu~. I certainly am the party leader. I have the obligation to explain what happened to Walker. Ah, yes, that's right. Because we're leaving here tomorrow, please do that.」

Elena stood up with a sigh as she talked about tomorrow's schedule.

After fainting when Vel from the magic stone, she hadn't taken a break at all. As expected, even Elena was feeling the fatigue.

Adding on to that, she had just absorbed the magic stone of the Ancient Dragon.

Rei nodded at Elena when she mentioned about the next day.

「Guru~?」

Set, who had been a silent sofa until now, gave a cry asking if it was okay. As he gave a cry, he turned to look at Elena.

Smiling like a beautiful rose for a moment, she gently stroked Set's head before returning to the inn with Linde.

「The party leader is still hard at work.」

Seeing her off, he put the two platinum coins into the Misty Ring before leaning back against Set to enjoy a moment of rest.

A waiting room of the first floor of the inn. Walker was waiting for Elena.

Walker stood up from the sofa he was sitting on and gave a bow.

「Elena-sama, sorry for coming to bother you.」

「Don't worry about it. Because I was planning to report anyway before I left the village, it saves me the time and trouble.」

Elena nodded at Walker and sat on the sofa opposite him. Seeing that, Walker exchanged a look with the owner of the inn, who then brought in some tea.

「This inn is certainly a place where nobles and big merchants stay. The tea they serve is very good.」

「Well, considering what you can get here, it's quite the expensive tea leaves.Now then, how can I help you?」

Elegantly carrying the tea to her mouth, Walker began to talk as he admired her.

「The Altar of Inheritance. I want to ask about what happened there. I was told that the person known as the General Princess went to challenge the dungeon and as a result, came back with only half her party. As the person in charge of the guild here, I have to ask what happened.」

「.....Hmm. I understand what you mean, but that said, there are some things I can't talk about.」

As she murmured that, Elena was troubled in her mind as she thought about how to explain things.

Members of the nobility.....furthermore, Viscount Sails' house, which had been close to the Duke Kerebel, a central figure of the Mireana Kingdom, had defected to the Bestir Empire. They weren't things she could talk about.

(No, to be exact, they probably haven't left yet. Communication from my letter or Vel, it's a fight between which one will reach father or Viscount Sails first.)

Walker considered Elena's words for a short time.

He was someone who was in charge of the guild branch near the dungeon, even at his young age. He quickly understood that Elena's statement indicated a political issue and gave a small nod.

「Well, then you can just talk about what you can.」

「I see.....then to put it simply, my two subordinates were caught in traps or attacked by monsters and died.」

「.....Traps and monsters, is it?」

「Ah. Traps and monsters.Do you know what I mean? At the very least, it's better that you do.」

For a few seconds, not more than ten, the two people looked at each other.

Although they were just looking at each other, the tension in the room rose as if crossing swords.

「.....I understand. I don't want to get involved in politics. If Elena-sama says so, I will follow.」

「Sorry about this. I'll get someone to pass you some money as compensation later.」

「No, I don't care.....is what I want to say, as we are a frontier guild branch, I'll welcome any support we can get.」

Walker gave a pleasant smile, as if the tension before had been a lie. Likewise, Elena also smiled.

Although they smiled at each other, both smiles were rather fake. Walker's smile was like a smile had just been pasted and stuck to his face. Because of her beauty, Elena's smile had the same feeling as smiling doll.

They weren't sincere smiles, but rather smiles for show. Not smiling from their hearts, but instead only putting on a smiling expression.

While they understood each other, they did not say anything.No, they couldn't.

Like that, with a smile that would cause Rei to doubt his eyes if he saw, she took a card out from her waist pouch and placed it on the table.

It was the one they had borrowed from Walker before entering the dungeon, the card that gave the bearer equal authority to Walker.

「Well then, I will return this card as well.」

「Thank you very much. Was it useful?」

「Ah. Thanks to this card, we didn't have to spend extra time waiting in line to enter the dungeon.」

「That is good.」

Still smiling, Walker put the card into his pocket.

「Since you've returned this card to me, your business in the dungeon is finished.May I assume that?」

「Umu~. I've done everything I needed to do here.」

「In that case, you will be leaving soon?」

「Rather than saying soon, I am planning to leave here tomorrow.」

At those words, Walker had a slight expression of relief.

Elena, the General Princess, was the daughter of Duke Kerebel, a central figure in the nobility. If something had happened to her in the dungeon by any chance, it could be expected that the resulting fallout would affect more than just the village around the dungeon.

While guessing Walker's thoughts, Elena kept the same fake smile she had before..

「That reminds me, if you don't mind, could you tell me your impression of the dungeon?」

At that sudden question, Elena brought the tea to her mouth as she remembered the incidents that had occurred in the dungeon.

「That's right. We proceeded along the shortest route down to the third floor using a map. After that, we had to search around, so it took longer. I didn't expect that there would be a forest on the fourth floor, we had to fight a troop of Water Monkeys there. As for the fifth floor.....」

Saying up to there, Elena paused for a moment.

(It would be better not to say anything about Grimm-dono. In other words, it's the same for the infinite loop trap.)

「Elena-sama?」

「Ah, I'm sorry. Regarding the fifth floor, it's filled with Undead. Because of their odour, your sense of smell becomes useless. Beasts and people with sharp senses in particular will suffer more. A lot of troublesome traps were located around the sixth floor. The lowest floor.....well, although we didn't fight it, unexpectedly, there is a S rank monster Silver Lion protecting the dungeon nucleus.....that's about it.」

「Thank you very much. Especially since the number of adventurers who can reach the sixth floor are few, Elena-sama's information is very useful.」

「What, there's not need to worry about it, you've also helped us plenty.」

After exchanging information on the dungeon for about 10 minutes, Walker stood up.

「I'm sorry, but I'll have to get going. Since the guild branch is small, there is also less manpower available.」

「I see, you've saved me a lot of trouble. As I said earlier, I'll be leaving tomorrow so this will be the last time I see you.」

「Yes, I know.」

Rising up from the sofa, Walker gave an elegant bow before leaving the inn.

Seeing him off, Elena went to her room.

As expected from her fatigue, she slept soundly.....and thus, their last night in the village built around the dungeon passed.

In addition, Rei slept outside until he was woken by Linde. Set was in a good mood after spending some relaxing time with Rei, which he hadn't done in a long time.

Chapter 108

The big city of Anessis, about a days travel from the Imperial Capital of the Mireana Kingdom.

It was comparable in size to the Imperial Capital, Kafiri, and was widely known as the second capital of the Mireana Kingdom.

At one end of the city was a huge mansion. The mansion, which could even be called a palace, was the the residence of a central figure of the Nobles Faction in the Mireana Kingdom, Duke Kerebel.

Its vast grounds were kept in good condition and the areas visible from the outside were famous as one of Anessis' tourist attractions.

A large bird with four wings cut through the air as it flew towards the residence at the back of the grounds. It landed safely on the perch meant for monsters and birds that delivered messages.

As soon as the bird landed on the perch, a sound rang in the rooms of the butlers and maids. The perch was a kind of magic item.

One of the butlers heard the sound and went over to the perch before taking a letter out of a small pouch attached to the bird's foot.....as soon as he noticed that the sender was Elena Kerebel, he returned to the mansion in a hurry and went to his master's office.

Walking quickly, he arrived before the office in a few minutes. Adjusting his breathing and taking a deep breath, he knocked on the door.

「Excuse me, master, an urgent letter has arrived from the young miss.」
「Hmm, that's fine. Come in.」

Obtaining permission to enter, the butler stepped inside.

The furniture in the office was very luxurious, worth several platinum to light gold coins.

However, it wasn't like the hobbies of the nouveau rich. Rather, the sofas, desks, chairs, bookshelves, tables and so on were tastefully selected to produce

a calm atmosphere. The paintings that hung on the walls were by renowned painters and costed an amount that ordinary civilians could live for decades with.

A man in his fifties was sitting at his office desk at the back of the room, reading documents. This was the person who held the most power in the Mireana Kingdom and was considered to be a second king. Liberty Kerebel.

Although he had a slender appearance, he didn't look weak. No, on the contrary, the dignity of a duke could be felt exuding from him. A rich beard grew around his mouth and he had the same almond shaped eyes as his daughter Elena. From his eyes, the will of Duke Kerebel could be felt.

「Pardon me. This is the letter delivered from the young miss.」

The butler gave a bow and placed the letter on the office desk.

「I will excuse myself now, master.」

「Thanks for you hard work.」

Replying as the butler left the room, he finished reading the documents he had been partway through in a few minutes before picking up his daughter's letter.

『Open.』

The letter, which he just used magic to open, had a seal on it that could only be opened by people with a specific magic power. He quickly read the contents.....before reading over it again several times.

「.....Viscount Sails has defected, has he.」

After leading the Nobles Faction for so many years, he frowned slightly at the betrayal of an ally he had been relying on.

At the contents of Kuust's death, he gave an unpleasant snort.

Reading until the end, there was no mention about whether the Inheritance Ceremony had been a success or failure. Spitting out a small sigh, he rang the bell beside his office desk. In less than a few minutes, a knock sounded against the door.

「Come in.」

「Pardon me, Duke. Did you call?」

It was the person who served as the Knight Commander of Duke Kerebel's knights, Philma de Giel, the second son of Marquis de Giel.

He was in his late thirties, nearing the age that a knight's strength would start to decline. However, his body was so well trained that you wouldn't feel that would happen. He was skilled in tactics, able to look at the wider situation and above all had the bravery to stand at the vanguard of the knights to raise their morale.

Normally, it was unthinkable that the Knight Commander would stand at the vanguard. However, he had the strength to make that possible. He was also the guardian knight of Duke Kerebel.

To the person who could be considered his right arm, Duke Kerebel casually passed the letter from his daughter.

「Take a look.」

Excusing himself, Philma quickly read through the letter he was given.

After reading everything in a minute, he gave a big sigh.

「Viscount Sails has betrayed us, is it.」

「Yes. If he had just moved to the Royalist Faction or the Neutral Faction, it would have been an event within the Mireana Kingdom and there would be no problems.」

「As expected, he cannot be permitted to move to the Bestir Empire.」

「That's right.Philma, can you lead the knights to defeat Viscount Sails before he decides to escape to the Bestir Empire?」

He thought about it for a couple of seconds before shaking his head.

「It will probably be difficult. No matter how fast the horses are, it will still take two days to reach Viscount Sails' territory from here. And even if it's Viscount Sails, if he has betrayed the Mireana Kingdom, he would be prepared for the worst. If we catch up, it will quite likely be near the Bestir Empire border. If so, there will be almost no time to fight, even if there is time, it will be very short. If it goes badly, a unit will probably come to pick them up from the Bestir Empire.」

「.....I see.」

He nodded at Philma's words. He thought for a few seconds while tapping his desk with his finger.....before giving a sharp look towards Philma.

「Philma de Giel, form a pursuit team from the Dragon Knights to defeat Viscount Sails.」

「.....Is that fine? Although the Dragon Knights can certainly make more distance than a cavalry force, as I said previously, troops may come out from the Bestir Empire.」

「That's fine. The information we have been given has provided us this opportunity. It would be foolish to not stop them from reaching the enemy.」

「In that case, the Dragon Knights may also suffer casualties.....」

「.....It will be unavoidable. They are necessary for such times.」

Dragon Knight. They were literally Knights who rode Dragons. Because they could fly through the air and attack using the Dragon's Dragon Breath, their fighting strength was great. However, a Dragon Knight has to be raised from when the Dragon hatches from the egg, their training costs were also very expensive. As a result, even Duke Kerebel, who was called the second king of the Mireana Kingdom, only had 20 Dragon Knights.

「That said, tell them to beware of the Demon Soldiers written in the letter.」

「I understand. I will start preparing for the pursuit.」

Seeing Philma leave the office, Duke Kerebel placed the letter from his daughter aside and picked up another piece of paper.

Although the contents of the letter written by his daughter was very important, Duke Kerebel controlled a vast territory and there were many other important works to be done. He first reached out for a pen to write a letter to inform Marquis Brassin that Kuust, the trusted leader of Elena's knight escort, had died.

「Hmph, foolish people.」

Finally, he murmured some short last words about Viscount Sails.

「Well then, thank you.」

Elena spoke to the man sitting in the driver's seat of the carriage.

Normally, Vel would be sitting there, but he had already betrayed them and was no longer in the party. Speaking of people who could drive the carriage, Kuust could as well, but he was dead. Rei and Ara didn't know how to drive a carriage and it goes without saying that Elena couldn't be allowed to drive the carriage. As a result, it was decided to hire an adventurer from the guild who could drive a carriage. The request was to drive them to to Gimuru first and then to Duke Kerebel after that.

「Y-.....Yes!」

Rei boarded the carriage with a smile as he saw the man nodding unconsciously, overpowered by Elena's breathtaking looks.

Ara had already prepared tea inside the carriage and placed the cups on the table.

There were three cups for Rei, Elena and herself, a sign that Ara was no longer wary of Rei.

Or maybe it was because she was given the Power Axe, which was placed inside the carriage.

As he thought about that, he sat down on a sofa. Shortly after that Elena sat next to Rei with a mischievous smile.

「Rei. The driver seemed to be scared of Set, is that okay?」

「It should be fine, Set won't do anything by himself. Maybe he will get used to it on the way to Gimuru. What about you and Ara?」

「In my case, the number of people.....it was a painful experience.」

She glanced around, probably thinking of Kuust and Vel, who had been with them when they went to the dungeon.

Ara saw that and unexpectedly turned her eyes to the window.

「Here, Elena-sama. I thought about it before I got on the carriage, but the weather is nice today isn't it. I guess it could be called a clear autumn sky.」

「.....Yeah, you're right. The autumn harvest is almost over. When that finishes, it will winter soon.」

She nodded while smiling at Ara's awkward topic change.

(Yes, it's already autumn. And once autumn passes, it will be winter. As expected, even the Bestir Empire won't move their army in winter. The battlefield will probably open in spring I guess. The power of the Ancient Dragon I have just received, I have to master it. Vel, I will not forgive you if I meet you on the battlefield. I swear I will avenge Kuust.)

As he noticed Elena's sharp loop, Rei brought the cup of tea to his mouth.

「Elena, after we return to the city of Gimuru, could you meet with Margrave Rowlocks to tell him the request has been completed?」

「.....Eh? Ah, ahh, that's right. Rei was only a temporary party member for this request. I've become accustomed to it.....」

Hearing that unexpectedly, her eyes went wide before she nodded.

「That's right. I guess that was the case.」

「Really. It was a short request but it felt so long.No, should I say it felt both short and long.」

Elena looked at Rei as she thought of past events and spoke up as she made a decision.

「Rei, if you don't mind, would you like to come with us?」

「.....Is it a new request? Or something else?」

「Ah. I'm asking if you would quit being an adventurer and join our knights.」

Hearing Elena's words, Ara, who was drinking tea, nodded with a smile.

「That would be good. With Rei-dono's abilities, he would make it to the top right away.」

As Ara smiled, Rei thought about it for a few seconds before shaking his head.

「I'm sorry, but as you know, I am ignorant of etiquette.」

「If you learned about those things then.....」

「I understand what Ara is trying to say, but my affinity with nobles isn't that good in the first place. While Elena and Ara are exceptions, you have to remember my relationship with Kuust. That is probably common.」

Kuust detested Rei and openly took the attitude disrespecting him, as if breathing the same air was hateful. However, Rei didn't even consider him as

one of those foolish nobles who only had pride and no skill.

Although their views of each other had improved near the end of the fight against Vel, Elena and Ara did not see that.

Remembering, Elena unexpectedly sighed.

「.....Really. It's a shame, but I won't go around deciding your future by my wishes.」

Though she said that, Elena still sighed in disappointment as she didn't expected to be refused.

Seeing that, Rei didn't say anything more and just brought the tea to his mouth.

(In the first place, my aim is Set's growth using the Magic Beast Art. It would be harder to collect monster magic stones once I join the knights.)

As Rei muttered in his heart, the words Grimm had said had left a strong impression.

That was, a magic beast could have the power to overwhelm the entire army of a country.

At the very least, it wasn't a fantasy. Using the Magic Beast Art, Zepairu had reached that level.

Hearing that story, Rei had the desire to grow stronger than ever. How strong could he and Set become?

(If I believe Zepairu's words, I should have an immense amount of magic power. That is to say, Set, who was created with my magic power, should have a greater potential than Zepairu's magic beast from the Magic Beast Art, which was capable of wiping out a country's army by itself. If we need to absorb more magic stones and accumulate more combat experience at the same time. I must also be able to fully utilise the magic power sleeping in my body.)

He glanced towards Elena for a moment.

(Yes, to never let my important friends face crisis a second time.)

TLN: My apologies Elena, you have just been friend-zonedahaha.

In this way, though the atmosphere in the carriage was somewhat subdued, they proceeded straight to the city of Gimuru.

Chapter 109

A black cloud drifted through the sky, it wouldn't be strange if rain started to fall. Still, the remaining heat from summer kept the weather warm. Ranga, the captain of the guards in the city of Gimuru, looked up to the sky.

「Seriously, I'm sick of this weather. If it's going to fall, why can't it just fall quickly.」

Hearing those words, one of Ranga's subordinates spoke in amazement.

「Even though you say that, doesn't the captain say that you want it to be sunny as soon as it rains?」

「.....」

Because the point said by his subordinate hit the bulls eye, Ranga scratched his head with a bitter smile on his stern face.

At this time, another subordinate suddenly called out.

「Captain, I spotted a carriage. It's heading towards us.」

「Well, this is unusual. It's probably not bandits then. Do you recognise the carriage driver?」

It was currently past noon, just into the afternoon. There were still quite a few more hours before dark, when adventurers would finish their requests and merchants and travelers would enter the city to avoid getting attacked by monsters. Basically, it was unusual for people to come to the city at this time of the day.

Well, although it was unusual, there would still be several such people everyday.

「The carriage driver.....um, I've certainly seen him before. It's an adventurer who has worked in the city of Gimuru before. However, he should have gone to the dungeon recently.」

「Ahh, I see. If he came from the dungeon, then it's not surprising that he's come back at this time.That reminds me, what happened about the story of merchant convoys heading for and leaving from the dungeon being attacked?」

「I haven't heard about that recently. Um.....look, it's the Griffon that follows the adventurer that captain is in charge of. Was his name Rei? After he left with those nobles, I haven't heard anything about him.....ah.」

At the stunned look of his subordinate, Ranga turned to look.

「What's going on?」

「I was just talking about it, but the noble's carriage. Isn't it that carriage?」

At the end of his line of sight, he could see the carriage. Although the carriage was still quite far, as a guard that protected the gates of Gimuru, it wasn't difficult for Ranga to identify carriages.

But in this case, he could only see the carriage, it was a different matter when he tried to identify it.

This was because the Elena's carriage had been given a magic effect to make it less conspicuous, making it harder to identify.

「Is that so? But back then, it wasn't an adventurer. The driver should have been a subordinate of that absurdly beautiful noblewoman.」

As soon as he spoke the words beauty, most of the people around him gave a sigh of admiration as they recalled Elena's appearance.

「.....Beautiful, wasn't she.」

「Ah. It was a level of beauty that you absolutely wouldn't see in this city.」

As he watched the approaching carriage, he remembered Elena's beauty.

「There were rumors that that beauty was the General Princess.....is that true?」

「Well, I wonder. She certainly had the looks, figure and demeanour. You could convince me that she was the General Princess.....however, why would such a famous noble come here to the frontier?」

「They headed for the dungeon so I guess there must have been something they wanted there.」

While listening to the discussion between his subordinates, Ranga unintentionally smiled as he watched the carriage.

Because he was the captain of the guards, although he knew, he was

forbidden by Margrave Rowlocks to mention Duke Kerebel's daughter, Elena. Because of that, he kept quiet when the topic of the General Princess came up in their discussion. But although he was not allowed to say anything, it did not take much time for rumors about her to spread around.

「Hey, both of you. The carriage will arrive soon, quit your idle talk. If you were a noble riding that carriage, you know what would happen if they heard what you were talking about right?」

「Ah, that's right. I'm sorry.」

「I understand.」

A few minutes after they stopped their idle talk, the carriage arrived at the main gate. At the same time, as the Griffon appeared from behind the carriage, the guards nodded in satisfaction that their guesses hadn't been wrong.

Before arriving at the main gate of Gimuru, Set had stayed in the shadow of the carriage, wary of any enemies or bandits that might attack. He gave a happy cry upon seeing the familiar figure of Ranga among the guards. Ranga involuntarily smiled as he stroked Set's head.

「Hey Set. It's been a while. Have you been well?」

「Gururu~」

As he stroked Set's head, Ranga's subordinates received and checked the guild card of the adventurer at the driver's seat. Rang knocked on the door of the carriage lightly. When the door opened, as he was expecting, Rei came out.

「Hey, Rei-kun. It seems that the request had been completed successfully.」

「Ah, well, I guess you could say it has been safely completed.....」

At those rare words from Rei, he thought if the request had failed somehow, but when he saw Elena come out of the carriage, he tilted his head slightly.

He had heard from Margrave Rowlocks that the request had been to escort the General Princess. Seeing that the person he was meant to escort didn't seem to have any injuries in particular, it could be said that the request had been successfully completed, couldn't it.

「The request itself has been successfully completed, but we lost a few party members.」

Even if it was Rei, as expected, he wouldn't leak the story that one of Elena's followers had defected to the Bestir Empire to a friend.

However, it was a fact that they had lost Kuust and Rei's bitter feelings were unchanged.

「Is that so. My condolences. But as a guard of the city of Gimuru, we welcome your safe return, Rei-kun.-, sorry for wasting your time here. Your guild card.」

Nodding at Ranga's words, he handed over his guild card.

As for Elena, she had received some documents from Margrave Rowlocks prior to departure. Because of that, she could pass through the gates with no problems. After checking Rei and the hired adventurer's guild cards, a Necklace of Subservient Monster was given to Set and they entered the city.

「So, where should we go?」

After entering the city of Gimuru, the hired adventurer called into the carriage.

Although he was frightened by Set when he was first hired, as expected, after traveling and camping together for several days, he had become less wary. He could now even stroke Set. The adventurer was also grateful that that he didn't need to always stay on guard. Most monsters had low intelligence and would be taken care of by Set when they attacked. To the adventurer, who was hired as both a carriage driver and guard, it was a godsend.

At that man's voice, Rei opened the carriage door to speak to him.

「Towards the Margrave's residence.」

「.....Wow, as expected of nobles.」

For an ordinary adventurer, they wouldn't be able to head to a lord's residence so easily. Only people who had received nominated request from a lord, like Rei's situation, would be able to do so.

「Unfortunately I'm not a noble.」

「I know, you also handed a guild card over at the gate. You don't feel like a noble either.」

「.....I don't feel like a noble?」

The adventurer murmured as he drove the carriage towards the lord's residence.

「Ah. The manner from being brought up that way, even in silence, that atmosphere would seep out.」

「That is probably true.」

Rei unintentionally gave a wry smile at the adventurer's words.

The environment that a person grew up in would give the person an atmosphere around them. In Japan, Rei had grown up freely in a rural town, northeast of the mountains. It was absolutely impossible for him to produce the atmosphere of a noble.

「Ahhhhh-! Set-chan is here!」

As he thought about it, he suddenly heard the cry of a child.

Looking towards the direction of the voice, he saw several children approaching Set, who was walking alongside the carriage, to stroke his back and give him food such as dried meat and sandwiches.

And hearing Set's name being called out, one, two, then more residents came out to watch.

Most were young children, but there were also teenagers, adults and elderly people

「.....What is this?」

The adventurer muttered dumbfounded.

To him, Set was a monster which wouldn't normally be in such a place. It wasn't an ordinary monster, but an A rank monster that most adventurers would be unable to contain. But with that said, the eyes of the residents and the 10 or so children around Set were like they were looking at an adorable puppy or kitten.

「Ahh, as I expected. I thought so after seeing your reaction when you saw Set, you haven't been back to Gimuru for a while have you?」

「No, well, still.....」

「Making it short, Set is a mascot in the city of Gimuru.」

At the words Rei said, the adventurer looked back in disbelief. However, with the evidence presented in front of him, he couldn't not believe. He turned to look and the carriage, then Set and then the residents, before turning back to Rei.

「Ah, fine. I understand that he's a mascot. But do something about this or else we can't move.」

「That is true.」

Nodding at his words, Rei jumped off the carriage and walked to where Set was.

「I'm sorry but we have to go to Margrave Rowlock's residence soon, so please leave Set alone for now. Because I'll staying here again from tomorrow, I would like to ask you all to come back tomorrow.」

「Ehh. I haven't met Set-chan in a long time though.」

「Yes, yes, just a bit longer?」

「He, you shouldn't annoy Rei-kun that much.」

A middle-aged woman, who was watching the children close to Set, told them off.

「Guru~」

The children looked dissatisfied, but reluctantly left after scratching Set's head.

「Onii-chan, it's a promise! Please let us play with Set-chan tomorrow!」

「I know, I will probably be at the usual place in the guild tomorrow, so you can play with him at that time.」

「Yes, I understand!」

Responding vigorously, the residents who had gathered around Set took the opportunity to return to their work.

「Alright. Let's go to the Margrave's residence.」

「.....O-Okay. Even so, the Griffon is a mascot. This city had changed quite a bit since I left to live at the dungeon.」

「Well, you'll get used to it.」

「Getting used to a Griffon, should I say, as expected of a frontier city like Gimuru?」

「At the very least, although I haven't been here for long, the residents of the city have gotten used to Set.」

After speaking with the adventurer, Rei re-entered the carriage.

「.....Seems like it's been hard on you.」

Ara called out as she smiled. Next to her, Elena was also smiling.

「Ah. I didn't think Set was this popular.」

「It's understandable though. Set is friendly.」

Elena had also played around with Set in the dungeon. Because she had also been helped by Set's friendliness and abilities, she looked satisfied as she walked to the carriage window see Set walk beside them.

After the activity around Set had settled down, the carriage continued on to Margrave Rowlocks residence without any further issues.

「No matter how many times I see it, it gives off the atmosphere of a fortress rather than a noble's residence.」

Ara murmured unintentionally as she saw it's ruggedness from the window.

Next to her, Elena agreed as she also turned to look at the residence.

「That's right. However, there is no guarantee that nothing unforeseen would happen at the frontier. In such a case, it would be necessary to accommodate as many residents as possible in the case of a siege.」

「Thinking about the residents living in this city, the residents hold a very good view of the Margrave. Although there is only one city here and it is on the frontier, the residents understand why Margrave Rowlocks is pouring all his effort into developing the city.」

Rei's words could be heard in the carriage as several knights came out from the mansion to greet them.